The Long History Of Sacred Texts



For many, there is a claim that is too enticing to resist: “This is THE book.All that you–or anyone–will ever need to know is contained herein.”It is tempting to exalt that which one believes to be an authoritative compendium of eternal wisdom–especially if it seems to offer sagacious council on life’s most pressing matters.A single source for all that?What more could one possibly ask for?

It makes sense, then, that we encounter this mentality in so many places.For those seeking answers (yet who do not want to go to the trouble of due diligence), this is an offer that is difficult to refuse. For then, one can answer virtually any pressing question with a decisive answer in the form: “Just open THIS book and refer to page 11.”

And for those seeking to promulgate a certain doctrine, it is stupendously helpful to have ONE THING to which all takers may reference.(After all, sacred creeds get much of their allure from claiming to be a one-stop-shop.) Hence venerated texts often serve as the foundation for institutionalized dogmatic systems. After all, it is easier to sanctify tenets if they are spelled out, in black and white.When the explicit adumbration of a proposed credo is contained within a consecrated book, the “Refer to page 11” Syndrome takes over; and the rest is history.

In this respect, sacred texts are effectively blueprints for self-serving fantasy.One might think of scripture as a self-serve dogmatic buffet, where one is invited to pick and choose whatever tantalizes one's fancy.The process yields an à la carte concatenation of beliefs that can be rationalized with a mere wave of the hand: "Just refer to page 11 in this book."Since it says so in THAT book, then it is to be considered unimpeachable.

In terms of social psychology, why does this work so well? For those searching in desperation for something–ANYTHING–to hold onto, the enticing prospect that the ultimate source is now in one's hands is not easy to dismiss.Consequently, the utility of a sacred text for dogma-mongers is undeniable.Whenever cult activity is afoot, it is standard operating procedure that some SINGULAR source is consecrated at the ultimate referent for True Believers.It is surely exhilarating to be able to hold something in one's hands and proclaim, "It's all RIGHT HERE."All the secrets of the universe: FINALLY revealed in THIS source.If all we'll ever need to know can fit into a single volume (as if it were a kind of fool-proof "field-guide to the universe"), then why bother with the daunting task of trying to synthesize human knowledge from myriad sources?(Who has the time?I have laundry to do and dinner to cook!)So we can't help but find the prospect alluring.There is undeniable appeal to being able to proclaim: "All the secrets of the universe are contained in these pages!"

That it is SACROSANCT means there is little cognitive work left to be done.That it lends credence to the fantastical gives one license to indulge in whatever flights of fancy prove to be most gratifying; and to engage in delusive thinking that absolves one of all intellectual responsibility.Indeed, one of the appeals of countenancing the "this is THE source" claim is that one is furnished with a sanction for Reality-denial–a validation for whatever delectable bit of farce happens to resonate.

As a bonus, one is given a free pass when it comes to intellectual obsequiousness.For the supposition always has an implicit proviso: "No need to inquire any further.The work has already been done.It's all RIGHT HERE." {1}The notion that the ultimate source is now in one's hands is like cat-nip for those who are existentially-disoriented–groping around in the dark, fumbling for something that seems solid.An instruction-manual for LIFE can be an efficacious palliative for existential vertigo.

Supply tends to meet demand.So it is no wonder that we encounter the fabricated mysteriousness around various texts.When it comes to X-fetishists' obsession with the farcical nature of their holy book (where X is any sacred text), the same psychological mechanisms are operative.As we'll see, True Believers tend to see the absurdity in everyone else's dogmatic system, but not in their own.

At the end of the day, we all want to be enchanted.By what?Well, by SOMETHING.And when others in our midst seem to be fascinated, our interest is all-the-more piqued.There is much to say about the social psychology of epidemic fascination (esp. as it pertains to collective delusion); a topic that goes beyond the scope of the present survey.Suffice to say: Positive feedback loops are at play whenever mass-mania / mass-hysteria is afoot; and a blockbuster is a surefire way to stir things up.

Marketers seek to explain social trends with appeals to "hype": our tendency to lend credence to whatever our peers seem to be buzzing about.We are strongly inclined to do something because we perceive it to be "the thing to do".Popularity is often a self-fulfilling prophecy (which is why its possible to be famous for being famous).Our predilection for bandwagons is based on a kind of neurosis.We don't want to "miss the boat".The ever-present fear-of-missing-out is a powerful motivator.

Why did you read this book, watch this movie, listen to this music, purchase this product, or support this politician?"Well, because everyone else in my social circle seems to be doing so."Perspicacity–let alone a meticulous process of critical inquiry and patient deliberation–rarely accounts for our choices.It's why fashion exists: if it's trendy, it will tend to catch on: a catch-22 of there ever was one.Nothing succeeds like something that is perceived as a resounding success.

The intoxicating powers of a sanctified tract can be extremely seductive to those open to being seduced.Even just the IDEA OF such a tract can hold sway.In other words, a tract–somewhat like a mythical figure or legendary folk-hero–doesn't even NEED TO EXIST in order to do the job.So it should come as little surprise that, for generations, many were seduced by H.P. Lovecraft's fabricated piece of esoterica: **the Necronomicon**.Those taken in by this famed book's mythos have even undertaken quixotic searches for the "original" text (that is: the earliest copy of a non-existent manuscript).In other words, they are looking for the "authentic" version of a fictional book. {5}

Some people have even taken it upon themselves to create a version of the Necronomicon themselves…and then, of course, pass it off as the real thing.(Ref. the "Simon" version, the Robert Turner version, and the Donald Tyson version.)Unsurprisingly, in each case, the published hoax garnered a devoted following.Thus acolytes swore to the bogus book's authenticity.After all, a hoax is not a hoax to those who are in its thrall.

The moral of the story here is simple: When it comes to sacred scripture, it is very easy to get swept up in the fervor…and eventually lose touch with Reality.In this respect, the difference between the Bible or the Koran and the Necronomicon is largely a matter of degree.The underlying psychology is the same.

The Necronomicon was not the only fetishized text that never existed.In Ancient Greece, there was **the "Heptamychos"** by Pherecydes of Syros.To the east, we find the farcical book of esoterica: the Tibetan "Book of Dzyan".Other sacred texts that may not have actually existed include:

- The **"Book of Yashar"** [Book of the Upright One / of the Just Man; typically rendered the "Book of Jashar"] (referenced in the Second Book of Samuel 1:18, and the Book of Joshua 10:13)
- The **"Book of Ahikar"** (referenced in the Book of Tobit)
- The **"Book of Noah"** (referenced in the First Book of Enoch; as well as in the Book of Jubilees)

There are a slew of apocryphal books referenced in Second Chronicles–among them: the **"Book of Shemaiah"** (a.k.a. "The Story of the Prophet Iddo the Seer") in 12:15; the **"Book of Jehu ben Hanani"** in 20:34; and the **"Lamentations of Josiah"** in 35:25.Second Chronicles 9:29 alone mentions the **"Prophecy of Ahijah"**, the **"Visions of Iddo the Seer"**, and the **"Book of Nathan"**.It doesn't matter that such books may have never existed.They beguile audiences nevertheless, because that is the power of delusive thinking.And so it went with the apocryphal tales in **the "Red Dragon" book**–purportedly given to King Solomon by Satan; now being kept under lock and key by the Vatican.

Sometimes, cult movements are based on egregious MIS-readings.That is, they proceed from farcical readings of ACTUAL texts–as with right-wing Christians with the synoptic Gospels (and so-called "Marxists" vis a vis Karl Marx's writings).

One can partake in contrived enchantment with virtually anything; as the preternatural exists wherever one may long to find it.Many are bedazzled by THE MERE PROSPECT that something might be magical (especially if is ostensibly supernatural).Anything that may somehow be miraculous can't help but capture our attention–and transfix us.Such was the case with the "Necronomicon".But here's the thing: In the event that a holy book happens to contain felicitous things, it is a salutary historical accident.Serendipity is to thank; not the book PER SE.

The power of fetishized books to DELUDE cannot be overstated.Funny enough, much of this requires people NOT REALLY KNOWING where they actually came from…or what's actually in them.For once people stop swooning and come to the material with sober eyes, the true nature of the fetishized text is often laid bare.As Isaac Asimov once noted: "Properly read, the Bible is the most potent force for atheism ever conceived."Of course, he could have said this about most any holy book (and in place of "atheism", he might have said "secularity").One could rephrase the quote thus: Honestly read, the [insert holy book here] is the most potent argument for free-thought.

We might also note the raft of pulp pertaining to Judaic mysticism (a.k.a. "Kabbalah")…starting with Hekhalot pulp, which originated in the [c]Hassidei Ashkenaz traditions of the Rhineland during the late 12th century.Oddly, that would later be incorporated into Knights Templar (and Masonic) traditions, replete with iconography like the seal of Solomon (later rendered the "mogen David" hexagram; a.k.a. the "star of David").God help anyone who has wasted their time trying to read even one of these tracts of mystical gobbledygook…let alone all ten:

- The **Book of Formation** ("Sefer Yetzirah")
- The **Book of Heavenly Palaces** (a.k.a. the third book of Enoch; "Sefer Hekhalot")
- The **Account of the Chariot** ("Maaseh Merkabah") {2}
- The **Radiance** ("Zohar") {3}
- The **Book of Illumination** ("Sefer ha-Bahir")
- The **Book of Raziel the Angel** ("Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh")
- The **Orchard of Pomegranates** ("Pardes Rimonim")
- The **Tree of Life** ("Etz [c]Haim")
- The **Eight Gates** ("Shemona She'arim")
- The **Spirit Of Life** ("Nefesh Ha-[c]Haim")

The first four may have originated in the late 2nd century A.D.The next five were composed between 1100 and 1600.The last was composed c. 1800. {4}Much of it was derived from Gnostic theology…and eventually incorporated motifs from Neo-Platonism.Case in point is the use of the Porphyrian Tree, named after Porphyry of Tyre (a commentator on Plotinus' "Enneads" from the 3rd century A.D.)The "Tree Of Life" cliche is as old as any cliche on record.

Man's fascination with mystical hokum seems to know no bounds.That which enthralled Jewish mystics in past ages is similar to what led tens of millions to become infatuated with, say, James Redfield's **"The Celestine Prophecy"** in the 1990's.The same mechanisms are at play.The most recent case of this: Rhonda Byrne's obvious sham, "The Secret",If the product fits the bill, then–unfortunately–credulity is beside the point.

Humans have an unquenchable thirst for enchantment.This has been abetted by humans' innate tendency to be transfixed by the seemingly preternatural.People enjoy being beguiled; and so are drawn to things that are fantastical and mysterious.It's why three of the best-selling books in the 1970's were about the origins of human civilization coming from aliens ("Chariots Of The Gods?"), the inexplicable disappearance of things at sea ("The Bermuda Triangle"), and the impending End Times ("The Late, Great Planet Earth").

"Everything I'll ever need to know is RIGHT IN HERE?Sweet!"Invariably, zealotry follows from obsessive commitment.Oftentimes, delusion isn't very far behind.Lovecraft's "Necronomicon" and the Kabbalah canon: This only the tip of the iceberg.The (eminently human) craving for mystification is concomitant with credulity and a propensity to become obsessed; and it has been the operating force behind bibliolatry for millennia.The use of sacred texts goes back to the Bronze Age–most notably: the Egyptian **"Book of The Dead"**. {6}

Something–be it a book or a place or a person or an object–is only a "holy" as people make it.(It is, as it were, sanctified by fiat–within a given community of believers.)The present discussion is about fetishizing certain tracts.This means more than merely sanctifying the text; it means reifying it and OBSESSING over it to the point where it takes on a life of its own. {7}

It easy to see everyone ELSE'S dogmatic blunders, but difficult to recognize it when it's happening to oneself.Dogmatism doesn't like mirrors.And neurosis rarely announces itself as neurosis.One can easily see the dysfunction when its OTHERS' brands, but when one is engaged in it oneself, it is somehow magically different.

What of Islam's holy book?It is instructive that in Classical Arabic, "kitab" has a twofold meaning: BOOK and LAW.In other words, the Koran (qua book) is equated with god's law.Subsumed under this singular moniker, they are deemed one in the same.In the same way that Pauline Christians claimed the Word became flesh, Mohammedans claimed the Word became text.Just as the "Christos" is co-eternal with the Abrahamic deity, so the "Recitations" are co-eternal with the Abrahamic deity.Both instantiations involve the divine being made corporeal: in one case as a person; in the other case as a book.Each is deemed the greatest miracle in human history by its respective confessors.The difference is that Jesus of Nazareth is seen as a manifestation of the godhead himself whereas the Koran is seen as a literal transcript of the godhead's SPEECH. {8}

Note that the Koran is not the only holy book in Islam. {10}Some precincts within Shiism posit any of three other sacred scriptures:

ONE: Some Shiites believe in the "Jami'ah" [alt. "Jam(i)a"], dictated by MoM to his cousin (and son-in-law via Fatima) Ali ibn Abu Talib.As the legend goes, the book is currently hidden…awaiting the appearance of the Mahdi.

TWO: Much less talked about is called the Book of Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq.Colloquially referred to simply as "Al-Jafr", it is a mystical tract comprised of the "Haft wal-Azella" and the "Ketab al-Serat" (annotations of the secret / hidden meanings of the Koran) as well as copies of the ORIGINAL (now forever lost) Torah and Gospels.Nobody has a copy of this fabled text; it is only ALLEGED to exist (in some ethereal way).The primary source for its legend is the "Kitab al-Kafi" by the Persian hadith writer, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq of Kulayn (c. 900).Belief in the book plays a prominent role in the Alawi / Nosayri sect of Shiism.

THREE: In the 10th century that the infamous Muslim secret society, Ikhwan al-Safa [Brethren of Purity], operated out of Basra.The fruits of its activities were adapted in what were called the Epistles–a collection of esoterica which influenced the thought of the Andalusian mystic, Ibn Arabi of Tayy (Murcia) in the late 12th / early 13th century (ref. his "Fusus al-Hakim").These letters came to be considered sacred texts in Isma'ili Shiism.

As I will try to show in the present essay, text-fetishization is a common phenomenon.We might begin by noting that Islam's holy book was not even the first mysterious tract that circulated in Arabia.The so-called **"Emerald Tablet"** (a.k.a. "Tabula Smaragdina"), later entitled "Kitab sirr al-Haliqa" ("Book of the Secret of Creation"), was a work of Hermetica originally composed in Syriac (a variation of Nabataean) script by Balinas of Tyana (a writer from Anatolia). {9}It dates back to the early 8th century–around the same time the Koran was being compiled.This is a prototypical example people trumpeting the divine origin of a book–as it was attributed (by ancient Egyptian Hermeticists) to the quasi-mythical god-man "Hermes Trismegistus" of Memphis.

The contents of the "Tabula Smaragdina" was eventually encapsulated in the **"Kybalion"** by Hermeticists.(This originated the New Age idea of "vibration" and the notion that the mind has the power to influence Reality.)The key was to shroud the book's origins in bedazzling mystery.It was the mysteriousness, rather than hard evidence, that induced aficionados to believe.

Some books are alleged to be the earthly reflections of eternal (divine) tables that exist in the heavens.The Sumerians got the ball rolling by positing the three clay **Tablets of Destiny** (the "Dup Shimati"), believed to have inscribed upon them the divine law.Another instance of the leitmotif was the eternal **"Jade Books"** from which (part of) the "Dao-zang" is purportedly derived (the canon on which the Taoist religion came to be based; not to be confused with the original Taoist philosophy–which was based on the writings of Lao Tzu).The ancient Egyptians posited the mythical **"Book of Thoth"**–a celestial tract that boasted magical powers.A more recent instance of the leitmotif: the so-called **"Akashic records"** attested by American mystic, Edgar Cayce.On such tablets, we're told, is inscribed timeless wisdom.(The tablet itself is often seen as eternal.)For Muslims, this should all sound oddly familiar.

The notion of celestial tablets may go all the way back to the Sumerian "Dup Shimati", but its long history continues to the present day.Just as New Age occultists posit the so-called "Akashic Records" as the source of their earthly wisdom, early Muslims posited "eternal tablets" as the basis of the earthly Koran (85:22 stipulates that the book is uncreated, and has existed since the beginning of the universe in its celestial form).In either case, the REAL "Recitations" are based on a celestial counterpart–sometimes referred to as the **"Lawh al-Mahfuz"**.Same motif, different brands. {18}

For medieval Hijazis, the leitmotif of an eternal celestial tablet was likely inspired by the Book of Jubilees, in which the leitmotif plays a key role.Proverbs 8:22 in the Hebrew Bible also invokes the idea.Later, Joseph Smith would make use of this leitmotif in upstate New York (in his claims, the tablets THEMSELVES were delivered to him alone).

History offers myriad cases of fetishized books that purport to have been "divinely inspired".We might start our survey with the sacred texts of the Faith espoused by the Etruscans–who predated the founding of the Roman Republic.Their primary holy book was the "Liber [Linteus] Zagrabiensis / Agramensis" (**"Book of Zagreb / Agram"**).The other significant scripture of the Etruscan Faith was a corpus known as the "Etrusca Disciplina".From whence did the material come?Sure enough: from purported revelations, delivered from on high.The most notable part of this corpus was the **"Libri Tagetici"**: revelations of a prophet known as "Tages" (who hailed from Tarchuna). {12}

We seldom take pause and note the number of sacred texts that have played a role in human history.The Book of Zagreb was not an isolated instance.Behold thirty major examples, and see if you can discern a common thread:

1. The **"Agam[a]s"**: **Jainism** {13}
2. The dogmatic portions of the (Sanskrit) **"Vedas"** (esp. the Rig Veda; though other vedas include the Atharva-veda, Yajur-veda, and Sama-veda from c. 1200 B.C.); as well as the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Mantras / Samhita): nominal **Hinduism**
3. The Devi **"Mahatmya[m]"** (a.k.a. "Durga Saptashati"), the "Devi-Bhagavata" **Purana**, and "Shakta" **Upanishads**: **Shaktism**
4. The "Shveta-shvatara" **Upanishads**: **Shaivism**
5. The Naalayira[m] [Tamil] **"Divya Prabandha[m]"**: **Vaishnavism**
6. The **"Kojiki"**: **Shinto**
7. The **"Avesta"** (e.g. the "Vendidad", "Visperad", and "Kordeh Avesta") as well as the **"Yasna"** collections (e.g. the "Gathas", "Yasna Haptanghaiti", "Ahuna Vairya", "Ashem Vohu", "Ab-Zohr", etc.): **Zoroastrianism**
8. The **"Menog-i Khrad"** [alt. "Menok-i Xrat"]: **Zurvanism**
9. The "Gandharan" texts and the (Pali) **"T[r]i-pitaka"** [three baskets: Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka, and Adhidhamma Pitaka): **Theravada Buddhism**
10. The (Ancient Chinese) **"Sutras"**: **Mahayana Buddhism**
11. The **"Kangyur"** and **"Tengyur"**: **Tibetan Buddhism** {14}
12. The **"Tai-ping-jing"** [Scriptures of the Great Peace]: religious **Taoism** {24}

13. The **Samaritan Torah**: **Samaritanism**
14. The **Hebrew Torah** (a.k.a. the “Pentateuch”; i.e. the five books of Moses; including the supplemental, “Book of Enoch”); as well as the “Nevi’im” and “Ketuvim” (collectively known as the “Mikra”, “T-N-K”, or Hebrew Bible): **Judaism**
15. **The Gospels** and other Apocalypse writings pertaining to Jesus of Nazareth (canonical, Coptic, Syriac, and Gnostic): early Christianity [**“the Way”**] in its various forms (as with, say, the “Peshitta” for Nestorians)
16. The letters of evangelism regarding “the Christ” by Saul of Tarsus, Ignatius of Antioch, and Clement of Rome [a.k.a. **the “Epistles”**]; John of Patmos’ **“Book Of Revelation”**: **Pauline / Nicene Christianity** (esp. as devised by Athanasius of Alexandria)
17. The **“Ginza R[ab]ba”** [Great Treasury; a.k.a. “Book of Adam”]; **“Drasha d-Yahya”** [Book of John (the Baptist)]; and **“Diwan Abatur”** [Verses of Abatur]: **Mandaeism**
18. Mani of Ctesiphon’s version of the **“Evangelion”**; as well has the **“Shapur-agan”** [Book of Shapur], **“Arzhang”** [alt. “Ertenk”; “Artha-Thanha”], and the (now lost) **“Epistola Fundamenti”**: **Manichaeism**
19. The **“Qur’an”** [alt. “Koran”; “Recitations”] purportedly delivered by Mohammed of Mecca: **Islam**
20. The **“Mets’hafe Kufale”** (a.k.a. “Lepto-Genesis”; “Ethiopic Book of Jubilees”) and the **“Mek’abiyan”** (a.k.a. “Ethiopic Maccabees”): **Beta Israel** {15}
21. The **“Guru Granth[a] Sahib”** (updated and expanded from the original “Adi Granth[a]”): **Sikhism**
22. The **“Mundhum”** (a.k.a. the “Kirat Veda”): **Kiratism**
23. Al-Amir al-Sayyid Jamal al-Din Abdullah al-Tanukhi’s **“Rasa’il al-Hikma”** [Letters of Wisdom]: **Druze**
24. Oyasama’s **“Ofudesaki”** [Tip of the Writing Brush]: **Tenrikyo**
25. The **“Phap-Chanh-Truyen”**: **Cao-Dai**
26. Baha’u’llah’s **“Kitab-i Aqdas”** [Most Holy Book] and the **“Kitab-i Iqan”** [Book of Certitude]: **Baha’i**
27. “Ras” Tafari’s **“Kebra Hagast”** and **“Holy Piby”**: **Rastafarianism**
28. The K’iche **“Popol Vuh”** [Book of the People]; the Yucatec “Chilam Balam”: **Maya** sacred scripture
29. Joseph Smith’s **“Book(s) of Mormon”** and **“Pearl Of Great Price”**: **Church of Latter-day Saints**

30. Sun Myung Moon's **"Wonli Ganglon"** [alt. "Wolli Wonbon"; later re-named "Wolli Hesol"; a.k.a. "Exposition of the Divine Principle"]: **Tongil-gyo** (Church of Unification)

Every one of these scriptures is at the crux of some kind of cult activity.For each, the underlying phenomenon is roughly the same.That is: In each case, we observe a brotherhood that is transfixed by the alluring exposition and bedazzled by the provocative statements contained therein–and seduced by the tract's author(s). For each one, we can find sycophants who insist, "This, and this alone, is THE book!"Of course, each of these books is sui generis IN CERTAIN WAYS; but it is the common thread with which we are concerned here. {16}

Needless to say, starting with Saul of Tarsus, every one of these authors was a fraud.For example, note the Imamiyyah demagogue, Siyyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi (a.k.a. the "Bab"; the "Gate").As luck would have it, he died before he could finish his magnum opus, the "Persian Bayan".Obviously, Providence was not behind his deeds.Moreover, his desperate attempt to defend his lofty claims, the **"Dala'il-i Sab'ih"** ("Seven Proofs") was little more than a compilation of specious apologia.

There are, of course, many sects that add to pre-existing texts–even in Islam.Numerous Sufi Orders have become cults-in-themselves, and boast their own scriptures to compliment the Koran.Such writings are typically treated as supplementary material to the extant scriptures (that is: they are proffered not to transplant, but to compliment).The problem is, AS COMMENTARIES, their very existence belies the notion that the original scriptures were adequate, let alone perfectly articulated.Many sects insist that their own commentaries are vital to understanding what came before–as if the received wisdom from days-of-yore required a didactic prosthesis in order to be cogent.And so such commentaries are MORE than just helpful (that is: more than mere annotation for those hankering for clarifications and elaborations); they are vital scriptural adjuncts, and so REQUIRED for anyone who seeks full apprehension.

In the above list, the Ofudesaki is notable because–just like the Koran–it is comprised of verse purported to be DIRECTLY authored by the one true god ("Tenri-o-No-Mikoto").As with the Koran, it was transmitted to the world via a human mouth-piece.The "messenger" was a Japanese woman named Nakayama Miki (a.k.a. "Oyasama") from the 19th century.

The “Ofudesaki” (along with its addendum, the **“Osashizu”**) serves as the foundational scripture of the “Tenrikyo” religion.Its MILLIONS of followers insist that the eloquence and profundity of the verse is unsurpassed.(Sound familiar?)Since they believe the words were not authored by Oyasama herself, but were merely TRANSMITTED by her, and were actually the words of god, they are deemed infallible…and thus unassailable.

“It’s all RIGHT HERE.”Such delusive thinking has to do with our fascination with preternatural–even divine–authorship.This concept dates back to the Iron Age–as with the Vedic notion of “apauru-s[h]eya” (Sanskrit of “divine authorship”).(I will explore this peculiar notion in the next section of this essay.)

For now, we might ask: What of a book that claims to be the transcript of the utterances of a great sage from a bygone era?In the 12th century, Geoffrey Monmouth produced, **“Prophetiae Merlini”** (a.k.a. “Libellus Merlini”), a collection of the prophecies allegedly propounded by Ambrosius (a.k.a. “Merlinus”; now rendered: “Merlin”), the storied wizard from the early 6th century. {11}The book was a big hit.Even five centuries later, Merlin’s “prophesies” were still being treated as authoritative by many–as in the popular 17th-century tract, **“The Whole Prophesie of Scotland”**.

When people become obsessed with a particular sanctified tract, they often fail to realize how ubiquitous the phenomenon has been around the world, and throughout history.Let’s survey forty other examples:

1. Practitioners of **Trika Yoga**: the **Shiva Sutras** (purportedly composed by Vasu-gupta of Kashmir)
2. Adherents of **Ayyavazhi**: Ayya Vaikundar’s **“Akilattirattu Ammanai”** [alt. “Akilam”; a.k.a. “Thiru Edu”] and the **“Arul Nool”**
3. Adherents of **Gnosticism**: the Apocryphae of James, John, Allogenes, Marsanes, and Zostrianos; the Apocalypses of Adam, James, Paul, and Peter; the Gospels of Peter, Mary, Truth, Thomas, Philip, and “secret” Mark (as well as those of the Nazareans, the Ebionites, the Hebrews, and the Egyptians); the **“Treatise on the Resurrection”**, the **“Tripartite Tractate”**; the **“Thought of Norea”**; and the various Clementine literature.
4. (Ethiopian / Eritrean) Orthodox **Tewahedo Christians**: the **Garima Gospels**, the **“Didache”**, and the **“Meqabyan”**.
5. **Sambian / Prussian paganism**: the **“Sudauer Büchlein”** [“Sudovian Book”]

6. Adherents of medieval **Mazda-ism** (a variant of Zoroastrianism): the (Pahlavi) **“Denkard”**
7. Adherents of **Lingayatism**: the Telugu epic, **“Basava Purana”** (by the Shaiva sage, Palkuriki Somanatha)
8. Adherents of **Ravidassia**: **“Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji”** (by “Satguru” Ravi-das)
9. Adherents of **Vajrayana** (esoteric / tantric Buddhism): the **“Nyingma Gyubum”**
10. Adherents of **Wu-wei-ism** (a.k.a. “Luo-Taoism”): the **“Scroll of Apprehending the Way Through Hard Work”** (by Luo Menghong of Shangdong)
11. Adherents of the **“Way of the Celestial Masters”** school of Taoism: the **“Xiang’er”** and **“Tai-ping Jing”** [“scripture of the Great Peace”] {24}
12. Adherents of **Mohism**: Mo-Di’s eponymous **“Mo-zi”**
13. **Shakyamuni** (tantric) Buddhists: the **“Manjusri-Nama-Samgiti”**
14. **Nyingma** (Kagyu) Buddhists: the **“Bar-do Thos-grol”** [alt. “Bardo Thodol”; a.k.a. “Tibetan Book of the Dead”] (as revealed to the Vajrayana “terton”, Karma Lingpa in the 14th century)
15. **Dzogchen** Buddhists [adherents of Atiyoga and of Bon]: “Dudjom” Lingpa’s **“Dudjom Tersar”**; the **“Menngakde”** canon (e.g “Vima[lamitra] Nyingthig” and “Dakini Nyingthig”); as well as Garab Dorje’s writings.
16. Adherents of **Bon**: the **“B-yang G-ter”** (“Northern Treasure”), the **“D-bus G-ter”** (“Central Treasure”), the **“Iho G-ter”** (“Southern Treasure”), and the **“m-D-zod P-hug”** (“A Cavern of Treasures”). {25}
17. Adherents of **Yarsanism** (“Ahl-e Haqq”; “People of Truth”): sultan Sahak’s **“Kalam-i Saranjam”** [“Discourse of Conclusion”]
18. **Yazidis**: the **“Meshefa Resh”** [Black Book] and **“Keteba Jelwe”** [Book of Revelation / Illumination; a.k.a. “Kitab al-Jilwah”]
19. **Rosicrucians** [a.k.a. Order / Fraternity of the Rose Cross]: Christian Rosenkreuz’s **“Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis”** [not to be confused with the (later) Order of the Rose-Croix, founded by Gerard Encausse (a.k.a. “Papus”); or with the Salon of the Rose-Croix, founded by Joséphin Péladan]
20. Adherents of **The New Church**: Emanuel Swedenborg’s **“The Heavenly Doctrine”**
21. Adherents of **Babism** (the precursor to Baha’i): the **“Qayyumu’l-Asma”** (“Maintainer of Divine Names”), the **“Kitabu’l-Asma”** (“Book of Divine Names”), and other writings of the “Bab”

22. Adherents of **Theosophy**: Helena Blavatsky's **"The Secret Doctrine"**; later with Alice Bailey's **"Treatise on the Seven Rays"** {27}
23. Adherents of **Thelema** [and affiliates of the "Ordo Templi Orientis"]: the writings of Aleister Crowley–most notably: the **"Liber AL vel Legis"**
24. Adherents of **Ifa**: the **"Odu Ifa"**
25. Adherents of **Satyananda Giri**: "Swami" Sri Yukteswar Giri's **"The Holy Science"**
26. Adherents of the **Agasha Temple of Wisdom**: the writings of Richard Zenor (as well as James Crenshaw's **"Telephone Between Two Worlds"**)
27. Adherents of **Hare Krishna**: A.C. Bhaktivedanta "Swami" Prabhupada's **"Chaitanya Charitamrita"** (allegedly based on Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's **"Shikshashtakam"**)
28. **Ahmadi Muslims**: Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's **"Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya"**
29. **Davidian Seventh-day Adventists**: Victor Houteff's **"The Shepherd's Rod"**
30. Adherents of **Falung Gong**: Li Hongzhi's **"Zhuan Falun"**
31. Adherents of **Orgone**: the writings of Wilhelm Reich
32. Adherents of **Eckankar**: the writings of Paul Twitchell
33. Adherents of **Kriya Yoga**: Paramahansa Yogananda's **"Autobiography of a Yogi"**
34. Adherents of [non-Abrahamic] **Spiritism**: Allan Kardec's pentateuch, known as the **"Spiritist Codification"** (most notably: "Le Livre des Esprits")
35. Adherents of [Abrahamic] **Spiritism**: John Ballou Newbrough's **"Oahspe"**
36. Adherents of **Discordianism**: the **"Principia Discordia"** {28}
37. Adherents of **Soka Gakkai**: Daisaku Ikeda's **"The Human Revolution"**
38. Adherents of Church of Divine Science with Nona Lovell Brooks' **"Mysteries"**
39. Adherents of **Hermeticism**: the **"Hermetica"** [a.k.a. "Corpus Hermeticum"], the **"Kybalion"**, **"The Golden Dawn"** texts, the "Cipher" manuscripts, and Eliphas Levi's **"Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine & Ritual"**
40. Some adherents of American **Millenarianism**: William Miller's **"The Millennial Harp"**

The list of people churning out artificially-sweetened hogwash seems endless.We could go on and on and on.More recently, we've seen New Age conspiracy theorists–as with the writings of David Icke.

The silliest example of fetishized text may be J.R. “Bob” Dobbs’ **“Book of the Sub-Genius”**–taken as gospel by members of the parody-cult, Church of the Sub-Genius. (We still await the Pastafarians’ scripture attesting to the Flying Spaghetti Monster.)

That makes a slew of case studies of what turns out to be–at root–the same phenomenon.How is it that this phenomenon has been so commonplace over the millennia?The short explanation: People crave enchantment; and what better way to deliver it than in a discrete parcel?Indeed, this was the case with all the works mentioned above.This has ESPECIALLY been the case with the Koran.

All of the works listed above demonstrate a basic fact: If the book’s contents SEEM mysterious, people can quickly become intoxicated by it.Themes tend to persevere over the ages.

“But wait,” comes an objection. “You can’t compare the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, or the Koran to Dianetics…or to any other wacky treatise written by some flakey mystic.”

Of course there are differences between these books; but it is the SIMILARITIES that are salient.(There can be little doubt that the Hindu Vedas have more intellectual heft than the idiotic ramblings of Helena Blavatsky; but that’s not the point.)Disparities in the merit of the material (i.e. variations in the degree of fatuousness) notwithstanding, the same underlying logic is at play in all the above cases.

It is no great feat to notice that the books listed above are quite different.After all, they are different books–composed by different people in different places and different times with differing attitudes, agendas, and superstitions.As intentions and beliefs varied, so too did the idiom in which scripture was couched (to accord with sensibilities and to address concerns).The present aim is to reveal what such works have in common.It is the COMMON THREAD that is instructive, not the differences.

Such discernment does not require us to pretend that there is equivalence where none exists.It just requires us to use inductive logic.That said, the contents of the Torah or the Koran is just as preposterous as the contents of, say, the “Book Of Revelation” or “The Millennial Harp”.

Various things can be adduced from this sample-set of sacred texts.A memeplex becomes more attention-grabbing memorable and contagious (that is: “catchy” and “sticky” in the lingo of epidemiology) when it is codified in a sacred document.(This

is especially so if dogmas are conveyed and instantiated via a compelling / captivating narrative vehicle.)For then the memeplex is concrete.That is to say: The dogmatic system–which otherwise might prove to be too abstract for practical purposes–is captured by an object for the eyes to see and the hands to touch.“It’s all right HERE,” I can say as I hold up the book like a talisman. What is numinous thereby becomes TANGIBLE.Followers have something to point to (as it were, to hold in their hands as well as their hearts).

By embodying it as SCRIPTURE, a memeplex is more readily sanctify-able–and much more amenable to faithful preservation.BUT FOR the aforesaid psychological mechanisms, the Koran (initially just an orally-transmitted, amorphous conglomeration of recitations) could not have “caught on” in the way (or to the extent) that it did…nor could have the other books listed above.

It is no wonder that, as with Constantine’s official canonization of approved (Nicene) doctrine, the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs employed the same strategy in order to consolidate political power…just as Iran’s Grand Ayatollahs have done with the politicization of Shia Islam and the Israeli government has done with the politicization of Revisionist Zionism. {23}In any given case, that one of the tracts “won out” over other candidates is an accident of history.Under alternate circumstances, it may well have been an alternate tract that prevailed.

When it comes to the genesis of the Mohammedan movement (i.e. proto-Islam): Had any of the so-called “Sahabah” been living in late 20th-century Los Angeles, they may well have become Scientologists…just as, had any Scientologists lived in early 7th-century Hijaz, they may well have become Mohammedans.Why is that?Dianetics and the Koran play similar roles in the lives of both kinds of religionist–satiating roughly the same hankerings.Each supplicant sees his respective “go-to” book as the ultimate, unimpeachable source of insight (the explication of a profound Truth that can be found nowhere else).Consequently, as far as they’re concerned, THEY have the answer in their hands; and that’s all there is to it.

This is how the devout Sikh sees the “Guru Granth Sahib” (seen as a literal embodiment of their saint) and how the fundamentalist Christian sees the “Book of Revelation” (seen as the ultimate prognostication of the apocalypse).It’s how the strict Jain sees the Agam(a)s.It’s how the Orthodox Jew sees the Mikra (Hebrew Bible).It’s how the Christian Dominionist sees the New Testament (especially the Book of Revelation).And it’s how the Salafi / Wahhabi sees the Koran and “sahih” Hadith.

As with the tendency to be tribalistic (and the predisposition to be dogmatic), this universal proclivity is an exaptation of our neurological makeup–a byproduct of human nature.We are hard-wired for cult activity.It is, as it were, the default setting for the operating system running on the brains of homo sapiens.

We all like to think–on some level–that there could exist a THING (a book, a person) that has celestial origins: a special source that is brimming with so much wisdom that it trumps everything else.Accordingly, any cult in which bibliolatry plays a significant role thinks that THEIR book is THE ONE.Ergo the different dogmatic systems that the above tracts yielded.Whether Mormons or Moonies, the basic logic of the sham is the same.As it turns out, it doesn't matter whether the phenomenon occurs in Korea or in up-state New York; human nature is human nature.The mentality is roughly the same in each one of the above cases: "Ah-ha!This is THE book."

Baruch-cum-Benedict Spinoza was one of the first to voice concerns about (the penchant for) bibliolatry in religious traditions.Spinoza abjured people to emphasize the spirit behind the text–judiciously considered–rather than obsessing over some perceived need to hew to the text down to every last letter.Instead of honoring "god's word" (the logos), he noted, those who fetishize a given book end up worshipping "paper and ink".He connected scriptural literalism with religious fundamentalism–replete with delusive thinking.Spinoza was particularly concerned about the dangers of "Doing God's Work" syndrome.He championed freedom of conscience, and touted the importance of free public discourse.

Of those who proffer the anointed tract, it can be said, "Finally!Someone has access to the answers to, well, EVERYTHING.The answers are here: IN THIS."Splendid.The deliciously straight-forward notion is almost irresistible for some people–especially for those who don't like to read a lot.Indeed, most people are highly disinclined to engage in lengthy study that might involve reading MANY books (yikes!) and require prolonged cognitive exertion (no thanks!)Consequently, the prospect of only having to read ONE book holds tremendous appeal.

It is tempting, therefore, to be able to point to a particular book as proclaim, "Yes! THIS is the one!"Eureka.Unsurprisingly, that is exactly what many people are inclined to do when presented with the opportunity.The prospects of doing so are hard to resist.

Amongst the sacred texts of history, there are a few notable exceptions to this trend–notably, the non-dogmatic portions of the Hindu scriptures: the Vedanta tradition of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the collections of stories (the Panchatantra, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, etc.)Other exceptions include the non-dogmatic portions of the Vedic literature and the Buddhist “T[r]i-pitaka”.

During the Axial Age, in China alone, there emerged myriad quasi-secular texts.They mused on such things as:

- The allegorical: Zhuang Zhou’s book of Taoist anecdotes, the **“Zhuang-zi”**
- The economic and political: Mencius’ **“Meng-zi”** (alt. “Meng-Tzu”)
- The cosmological: Fu Xi’s **“I Ching”**; the **“Book of Changes”**
- The tactical: Sun Tzu’s **“Art of War”**
- The spiritual: Lao Tzu’s **“Tao Te-Ching”**
- The social: Confucius’ **“Analects”**

Such tracts admitted to not having all the answers–and were consequently less prone to fostering cult activity (which is to say: they were more amenable to free-thought).

Cognitive exertion?Due diligence?Humbug.It is much easier to say be able to say, “It’s all here in this book.For such-and-such query, just refer to page 11.”Wouldn’t it be nice if it were that simple?Wouldn’t it be splendid if that’s how “wisdom” were gleaned?To the question “Why?” on ANY MATTER, one always has an answer ready: “Because it says so HERE, in THIS BOOK, on page 11.”Are we to suppose that the best way to live life can be gleaned from an instruction manual? {19}

The hypnotic effect of a book is not automatic.One must first be primed to believe that the book-in-question is MEANT to hypnotize.Fetishized books don’t themselves inculcate; but they are the blueprints for inculcation.They effectively serve as guidebooks for indoctrination.When a sycophant need only refer to page 11 in the designated scripture to determine what shall be done, it is beside the point WHAT page 11 says.(It could conceivably say ANYTHING.)Rather, it’s THAT it says what it says that counts.Consequently, that it is THE ONLY valid way is taken as gospel… whatever it might be.(Wouldn’t it be magnificently convenient if that were how the universe worked?)

In reality, of course, there is no “THE book”.There are just books…written by fallible humans under various circumstances…some of them much more influential than others; some much better than others.(The Agam[a]s and Vedas hold far more value than, say, “The Millennial Harp” and “The Shepherd’s Rod”.)The degree to which a work accrues a following often depends on its capacity to ENCHANT.

Fascination with the esoterica has been illustrated by a preponderance of mysterious tracts.The phenomenon goes back to the Chaldean and Sibylline books–esoteric texts regarding Hellenistic sorcery (e.g. the notion of the “seven rays”) and oracular material from the early 6th century B.C. (purported to have originated on Mount Ida).In Judaic lore, we find the **“Book of the Virtuous Wisdom of Joshua ben Sira[ch]”** (a.k.a. the “Wisdom of Sira[ch]”; “Book of Ecclesiasticus”) and its acrostic derivative, the **“Othijoth ben Sira[ch]”**, which dates back to the 2nd century B.C.The **“Sefer ha-Bahir”** [Book of Brightness] by Nehunya ben Ha-Kanah (c. 100 A.D.) is an example of early Judaic mysticism that eventually became known as the Kabbalah.

An early example of a magical book that was believed to bestow upon the reader special insights into the inner workings of the cosmos was the aforementioned (quasi-mythical) Ptolemaic “Book of Thoth”, first composed in Demotic script.

During the Middle Ages, myriad other books enjoyed on a beguiling aura of mystique.We’ve already mentioned the canon of Kabbalah texts.That was only the beginning.The fascination with the mystical continued apace.Twenty other notable examples of arcane texts that enthralled wide audiences:

- The **“Kitab al-Mudkhal al-Kabir”** by Persian mystic, Abu Mashar of Balkh (a.k.a. “Abumasar”), the official astrologer of the Abbasid court in Baghdad (c. 848)
- The Turkic **“Irk Bitig”** [Book of Divination / Omens] (composed in Orkhon script] (9th century)
- The **“Oracles of Leo the Wise”** were circulated in the Eastern Roman Empire at the end of the 9th century.
- The Hermetic **“Ghayat al-Hakim”** [Goal of the Wise; Romanized to the “Picatrix”], originally composed in Arabic; probably somewhere in Andalusia (10th or 11th century)
- **“Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu-shu”** by Japanese mystic, Honen of Nara [“Jodo” Pure Land Buddhism] (12th century)

- The Old Norse **“Havamal”**, **“Runatal”**, and **“Ljodatal”** are compilations from the 13th century (though based on Norse verse dating back to the 9th century).
- The Arabic book of theurgy, **“Shams al-Ma’arif wa Lata’if al-Awarif”** [Book of the Sun of Gnosis and Subtleties of Elevated Things] by the Maghrebi occultist, Ahmad ibn Ali of Bona [Annaba, Algeria] (a.k.a. “Ahmad al-Buni”) (13th century)
- The **“Smithfield Decretals”** is a set of bizarre commentaries commissioned by Pope Gregory IX (early 13th century)
- The mystical **“Vaticinia de Summis Pontificibus”** was a collection of prophecies about the Vatican (late 13th century)
- The **“Speculum Astronomiae”** [Mirror of Astronomy; an attempt to reconcile astrology with Christianity] by Albertus Magnus (13th century)
- The quasi-Judaic **“Book of Abr[a]-Melin”**, which purportedly originated in Egypt (14th century)
- The **“Cloud of Unknowing”**, an esoteric treatise on Christian mysticism (14th century)
- The Teutonic **“Theologia Germanica”**, a mystical tract likely inspired by “Meister” Eckhart von Hochheim of Thuringia (14th century)
- The infamously inscrutable **“Voynich” manuscript** [named after the Polish book-dealer who was the book’s first custodian] (early 15th century)
- The alchemistic writings (including accounts of the fabled philosopher’s stone) by English monk, George Ripley (15th century)
- The **“Arbatel De Magia Veterum”** (16th century)
- The **“Prognosticon Theophrasti Paracelsi”**, a collection of the Hermetic writings, replete with the prognostications of “Paracelsus” (16th century)
- The **“Book of Soyga”** (a.k.a. the “Aldaraia”; alt. “Tractatus Astrologico Magicus”), a tract of abstruse incantations composed in Latin by John Dee–an occultist advisor to Queen Elizabeth who claimed to have transcribed the text from what had been given to the first man, Adam (16th century)
- The so-called **“Sibylline” books**, kept by French Queen Catherine de Medici (16th century)
- The quasi-Zoroastrian **“Dasatir-i Asmani”** by the Persian mystic, Azar Kayvan of Estakhr [Fars] (late 16th century)

Some fetishized books deal with what is colloquially dubbed “dark magic”–as with grimoires.A dozen of the most notable instances composed during the Renaissance:

- The **“Liber Juratus Honorii”** [Sworn Book of Honorius] by Honorius of Thebes (13th century)
- The quasi-Christian **“Heptameron”** by Pietro of Abano (c. 1300)
- The quasi-Judaic **“Mafteah Shlomo”** [“Key of Solomon”] (14th century)
- The Roman Catholic-oriented **“De Occulta Philosophia”** trilogy [three Books of Occult Philosophy] by German occultist, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim [Cologne] (early 15th century)
- The so-called **“Munich Manuel”** of Demonic Magic (15th century)
- The pseudo-Solomonic grimoire, **“Book of Spirits”** (15th century)
- **“De Officiis Spirituum”** [alt. “Liber Officiorum Spirituum”; Book of the Office of Spirits] (16th century)
- **“De Praestigiis Daemonum”** [“On The Illusions of Demons”]–replete with the infamous “Pseudomonarchia Daemonum” [“Hierarchy of Demons”] by Dutch occultist, Johann Weyer (16th century)
- The **Books of Oberon and Razi-El** (16th century)
- The **“Arbat-El de Magia Veterum”** (late 16th century)
- The Icelandic **“Galdrabok”** [Book of Magic] (c. 1600)

Also influential was the Germanic grimoire, **“Svartebok[en]”** [“Black Book”].This occult book–essentially a catalogue of arcane spells–was also known as the “Cyprianus”, as it was purported to have originated with the legendary 3rd-century monk, Cyprian of Carthage.It was later rebooted in the 17th century by John Fell of Oxford as the “Black Books of Elverum”.The 17th century was also when the goëtia, **“Clavicula Salomonis Regis”** [the Lesser Key of King Solomon”] was composed…though it, too, claimed to be derived from more ancient material. {21}The **Codex Gigas** also offers a case-study in medieval demonology.

A few of these books appeared of the Muslim world–reminding us that the fascination with mystical texts occurred in Dar al-Islam just as much as anywhere else.Beguilement knows no geographical limitations; and the appeal of enchantment transcends culture.Human susceptibility to entrancement is universal because human nature is universal.

Most of the esoteric tracts listed above are comprised primarily of recondite ramblings.Even so, they have bewitched people for centuries–irrespective of ethnic background.Once equipped with a full slate of superstitions, one is always primed to

adopt new (otherwise unrelated) superstitions…should one find those superstitions sufficiently enticing.Credulity knows no FORMAL bounds.This is why it tends to be the more religiously-inclined taken in by pyramid schemes and other scams…and why many converts jump from one dogmatic system to another.(Even some of the most doctrinal Jews / Christians / Muslims ended up being bamboozled by “The Secret”.)Ardent religionists are fine with hewing to their creed even as they knock on wood, throw coins into water-fountains, and wish upon shooting stars with their fingers crossed.

Helena Blavatsky formed the Theosophical Society in 1875, thereby inaugurating a skein of occult publications.Her magnum opus, “The Secret Doctrine” would be published in 1888.American neo-pagan, Charles Godfrey Leland composed **“Aradia”** (a.k.a. “Gospel of the Witches”) in 1899–the purported transcript of an ancient Tuscan prophet named “Vangelo”.The work has since been influential in Wicca.Soon thereafter, Austrian mystic, Rudolf Steiner began churning out his esoterica.

By the turn of the century, a Siberian (Komi) Faith healer named Grigori Rasputin was feeding nonsensical Christian mysticism to the Russian Tsar.Those hungry for enchantment in London were primed for **“The Cosmic Tradition”** by Polish Judaic occultist, Max Theon (who had founded the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor in 1884).In 1904, Aleister Crowley penned the aforementioned “Liber AL vel Legis”.In 1908, there emerged the aforementioned “Kybalion” and–shortly thereafter–William Walker Atkinson’s **“Thought Vibration”** (a.k.a. “The Law Of Attraction In The Thought World”).In 1920, Danish occultist, Michael Agerskov penned **“Vandrer mod Lyset”** [“Toward the Light”].

Decade in and decade out, we see how marketable new material was.There were always new audiences waiting to be entranced by, well, SOMETHING.In the 1920’s, Ernest Holmes was hawking **“The Science of Mind”**.In the 1930’s, Arthur Bell hawked **“Mankind United”** and Edgar Cayce hawked his psychic powers (harnessed, he insisted, from Atlantis).In the 1940’s, the American rabbi, Joshua Loth Liebman pioneered religion-based self-help pablum with his **“Peace of Mind”**.In the 1950’s, Gerald Gardner hawked the **“Book Of Shadows”** in England; Armenian mystic, Georges Ivanovich Gurdjieff hawked **“All and Everything”** in Russia; and American science fiction writer, L. Ron Hubbard hawked **“Dianetics”** in the U.S.In the 1960’s, Jane Roberts hawked her **“Seth Material”**.In the 1970’s, Helen Shucman hawked **“A Course In Miracles”**; while Franklin Albert Jones (a.k.a. “Adi Da Samraj”) churned out his zany esoterica.

And so it has gone with the reams of “New Age” and “Self-Improvement” pablum churned out by motivational speakers–from inspirational speaker, Toni Robbins to self-help guru, Werner Erhard (of “Landmark Worldwide” fame).In the 1990’s, uber-charlatan, Deepak Chopra peddled his New Age bunkum (with an enthusiastic push from Oprah Winfrey).And by 2006, mass delusion was sufficiently severe that Rhonda Byrne’s risible **“The Secret”** sold 20 million copies (also with an enthusiastic push from Oprah Winfrey). Whether it was Byrne’s “The Secret” or Dushkova’s **“The Book Of Secret Wisdom”**, the same psychical vulnerabilities were being exploited.

Even with the benefits of modern science and public education (at the turn of the 21st century), charlatanry was at a fever pitch.Credulity was alive and well.

Over the generations, dogma-peddling has occurred in many contexts–from astrology to sham psychology.The specious Myers-Briggs “personality test”–pre-eminent amongst cults of personality testing–is a reminder of how bone-headed fanciful thinking can be.The gimmick is little other than a Zodiac with pseudo-scientific pretenses.Alas, the commodification of personality traits has become a booming business.Myers-Briggs took this to new heights.This particular junk-science rests on fabricated either/or queries.Myers-Briggs bases its profiles on false dichotomies, thus entirely misconstruing how human psychology works.It determines one’s status in each of the four dualistic classifications (hence sixteen possible permutations); and does so by posing questions for which the answers are NEVER mutually exclusive.Spectra are treated as binary categories–completely disregarding the malleability of personality.Such pigeonholing flies in the face of all we know about psychical dynamics.But no matter.It’s simple, it’s catchy, and it’s seems plausible to the simple-minded people to whom it is targeted.

There is no reason to be mystified by any of this.Esoterica can be tantalizing–even enrapturing.But it’s all just snazzy balderdash.Touting sibylline exposition as divinatory exploits the widespread tendency to misconstrue inscrutability as profundity.

Even narrative books can take on a mesmerizing patina of mystique.Take, for instance, Ibn Tufail’s **“Hayy ibn Yaqdhan”** from the 12th century.Rumi’s entrancing **“Masnavi”** has served as an anthology of spiritual guidance for Sufis since the 13the century.Dante’s **“Divine Comedy”** has enthralled people in Christendom since it was composed in the early 14th century.The **“Hypnerotomachia Poliphili”** was an allegory composed in a cryptic language by Venetian author, Francesco

Colonna at the end of the 15th century.The **“Prodigi Orum Ac Ostentorum Chronicon”** was composed by a French writer named Conrad Lycosthenes in the 16th century.The ability to bedazzle is often taken as the mark of prodigious sagacity.This dates back to the enthralling tales of the Hebrews found in the Mikra… as well as the countless “sacred histories” around the world.

Meanwhile, there have been a slew of hoaxes that have transfixed wide audiences.The so-called **“Donation of Constantine”** was used for centuries to justify the Pope’s sovereignty over worldly rulers.Commissioned by the Vatican in the late 8th century, it held that Constantine the Great ceded of his power to Pope Sylvester (who had–it was purported–cured the Emperor’s leprosy).Hence the Holy Roman Empire was afforded an air of legitimacy.

The ostentatiously enigmatic **“Rohonc[zi]”** Codex from Hungary was concocted in the late 18th century (in an imaginary language).Only after many generations was it revealed to be a forgery.The **“Oera Linda”** of the 19th century was a book of contrived esotericism composed in Old Frisian.It claimed to be a historical record from Ancient Antiquity–replete with accounts of “Atlantis”.(One of its biggest aficionados was Heinrich Himmler.)In reality, the arcane tract was concocted in the late 19th century.

Also from the late 19th century: the maudlin **“Archko”** documents (an attempt by William Dennes Mahan to provide historical documentation of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth) and **“The Two Babylons”** (an anti-Catholic tract composed by Alexander Hislop, a vehemently Protestant Scottish minister).

In Christianity, there has been a profusion of trash-pulp, from Augustine of Hippo’s “City of God” and his “Confessions” to Teresa of Avila’s “The Interior Castle” and “Way of Perfection”.The amount of pablum produced in Christendom alone could fill warehouses.

Note, though, that fetishized texts do not necessarily have to do with the occult or political ideology or sorcery.Take, for instance, the ronin swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi’s **“Go Rin-no-Sho”** [“The Book of Five Rings”] from c. 1645, a hallowed text on “kenjutsu” [Japanese martial arts; esp. sword fighting]–filled with existential insights.The work is still hallowed to this day.

In recent times, quasi-cult followings have formed around various works that bewitch and bedazzle–from the **“Urantia”** Book to Carl Jung’s **“Liber Novus”** (a.k.a. the “Red Book”)–and a miscellany of other New Age rubbish.The examples of

such fetishized pulp are, of course, innumerable.For almost every demagogue, one is sure to find some sort of hallowed document that articulates the doctrine on offer.Listing every one would be as tedious as it would be pointless.For very few have the prodigious gravitas that holy books command.

For the patrons of each of these publications, the impetus is the same as when ancient Egyptians were moved to countenance the material found in the Book of the Dead over three millennia ago.

Human nature hasn't changed; just the packaging of dogmatic indulgences.The universal craving for enchantment transcends epochs and cultures…as does the propensity for credulity.

The lesson to take home here is: People in every era are looking for an ultimate source of insight–wisdom that can be found nowhere else.It's why people today so vociferously buy so-called "self-help" books.Thus, bibliolatry afflicts populations hungry for "ANSWERS"…who crave a solution to life's woes that can be packaged in something tangible.If the solutions to all that ails the world can LITERALLY be held in one's hand, all the better.

In the event that a person is existentially disoriented, groping around in the dark for something–ANYTHING–solid to hold on to, then once he is given something that seems to "do the trick", he will be apt to grasp it…and, thereafter, cling to it vociferously.For some people, that thing might be "The Orchard of Pomegranates".For some Christians, it might be Rick Warren's "The Purpose Driven Life".For Muslims, it is usually the Koran.And for Arthur Dent, it was the "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy".

Contagion theory (spec. the social-psychological arena of epidemiology) can help us understand how certain books "catch on" while others do not.Much of it has to do with hype.Hype, we should bear in mind, is categorically ameritocratic.It should go without saying that quality and popularity tend not to coincide.(Unfortunately, merit and consumption RARELY correlate.)Every once in a while, the two metrics ARE concomitant (as with Thomas Paine's "Common Sense"); but more often than not, they do not (as with Mao's Little Red Book).The disparity, though, is gargantuan.Unfortunately, for every "Theory of Justice", there are a thousand copies of "The Purpose Driven Life" circulating.Though the packaging is quite different, there is virtually no difference in merit between, say, the vacuous asseverations in

the Kabbala and the vacuous asseverations of, say, Deepak Chopra.The branding / marketing is adjusted according to the audience; so each author adds his own touch–simply putting a new twist on the same gimmick.

And so it has come to pass that it is a world drowning in exalted trash-pulp in which we find ourselves.

We all desperately want to believe in magic.Being creatures hankering for a captivating narrative, we are all suckers for a good story.So when people become obsessed with the “Toltec” Shamanic pontifications of Carlos Castaneda, the same psychological mechanisms are at work as when some people (the so-called “Mekubbal”) became enthralled by Kabbalistic drivel many centuries ago.

Not all cult activity has a holy book at its center.Mithra-ism appears to not have had a sacred text; nor did Ashur-ism; nor did Tengri-ism; nor did the Faith of the Vikings or of the Druids.

There are some religious traditions that have no surviving sacred texts–as with the Carvakas and the Ajivikas.Any scriptures used the Ebionites are long-lost. Clearly, not all cults need a holy book. Pace the writings of George Payne, James Anderson, and Laurence Dermott, Freemasonry has no sanctified scriptures. {22}Pace the writings of Johann Adam Weishaup, nor does the Illuminati.Pace the writings of Eugen Grosche (a.k.a. Gregor A. Gregorius), nor does Fraternitas Saturni.Nor do practitioners of Santeria.Nor do the Shriners.Nor did the denizens of Camp Chesterfield, the People’s Temple, or Heaven’s Gate.Nor do Germanic Neo-pagans (e.g. Odinists / Wotanists, Theodists, Forn Sior, Asatru, etc.) or Reiki healers (followers of Mikao Usui).Indeed, systematized superstition can subsist without reference to a specific (sacralized) text; but having such a text certainly doesn’t hurt.

Having a sanctified scripture (a singular source to which True Believers may refer) helps to formalize the memeplex (e.g. by codifying doctrine).It also provides a template for hyper-dogmatic splurges–an opportunity that many are eager to seize.Holy books indulge people’s yearning to explain everything about everything… even as the authors end up explaining almost nothing about anything (other than, of course, their own flights of fancy).Sacred texts obscure Reality while revealing a lot about the psychological profile of the authors and their acolytes.As is often the case, scripture says more about the authors and their readership than about what the book is purportedly written about.Steeped in orgies of dogmatism, audiences are

invited to participate in a collective delusion; lured by prospects of “being in the know”.Everyone likes to think that they are getting the inside scoop.(Such an enticement explains why tabloids and gossip mags sell so well.)Holy books cater to these hankerings better than anything else.

Some cult movements–ranging from benign to malign–focus on a designated set of texts for inspiration, yet stop short of sanctifying them outright.Confucians with the “Analects” is a prime example from Classical Antiquity.More recently, we might note Christian fundamentalists with the writings of Hilaire Belloc, Francis A. Schaeffer, Gary North, G.K. Chesterton, et. al.; as well as the manifesto, “The Fundamentals: A Testimony To The Truth” (ed. A.C. Dixon).For a Middle-Eastern twist, we might refer to Armenian mystic, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff’s aforementioned “All & Everything”.We also encounter oeuvres from cult leaders, such as believers in the prophecies of Pothuluru Veera-brahmendra with his **“Kaala-Gnanam”**.

We might also note dream interpreters obsession with Freud’s **“Die Traumdeutung”**, radical behaviorists with the writings of B.F. Skinner, homeopaths with the writings of C.F. Samuel Hahnemann, and Numerologists with the writings of Irenaeus, Ambrose, Augustine, et. al. (later popularized by contemporary hacks like Michael Drosnin).The examples of anodyne dogmatic systems inspired by trash-pulp are endless. {31}

But not all instances of the phenomenon are benign.Ten marginally malign examples [followed by the cults that were spawned]:

- Black Hebrew Israelites with the writings of Marcus Garvey and Wentworth Arthur Matthew [**Nation of Yahweh**, **Commandment Keepers**, and the **ICGJC**]
- (Some) Sabbatarianists with the writings of Joseph Bates (as well as Ellen G. White’s “Inspiration”) [**Seventh Day Adventism**]
- Jehovah’s Witnesses with Charles Taze Russell’s **“Millennial Dawn”** and Joseph Rutherford’s **“The Finished Mystery”** [**Watchtower Society**]
- Christian Faith-healers with Mary Baker Eddy’s **“Science & Health; with a Key to the Scriptures”** [**Christian Science**]
- (Some) black Exceptionalists with the writings of Wallace Fard Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad [**Nation of Islam**]
- Christian Millenarianists with Lewis Sperry Chafer’s **“Systematic Theology”**, Rousas John Rashdoony’s **“The Institutions Of Biblical Law”**, Elizabeth Dilling’s **“The Red Network”**, Hal Lindsey’s **“The Late, Great Planet**

Earth”, and the writings of David Chilton [various apocalyptic Christian sects; Christian Re-constructionists; American **Dominionists**]
- Free-market fundamentalists with the writings of Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Robert LeFevre, Murray Rothbard, Lysander Spooner, Milton Friedman, Arthur Laffer, James McGill Buchanan Jr., Jude Wanniski, Thomas E. Woods, Ed Crane, Ayn Rand, et. al. [right-wing **“libertarianism”** ; **Objectivism**; anarcho-capitalism] {32}
- Plutocrats with the writings of Herbert Spencer; Justice Lewis Powell’s notorious 1971 memo [corporatism; **Social Darwinism**] {33}
- Adherents of the (Japanese) Soto / Caodong-Rinzai / Linji hybridization of Zen Buddhism with Hakuun Yasutani’s **“Zen Master Dogen & the Shushogi”** (alt. “Treatise on Practice & Enlightenment”) [**Sanbo Kyodan**] {34}
- Acolytes of Lafayette Ronald Hubbard with his corpus of recordings and writings (esp. “Dianetics” c.1950) [**Scientology**]

We might also note American right-wing ideologues with the writings of Leo Strauss, Walt Rostow, Irving Kristol, William F. Buckley Jr., Paul Johnson, David Horowitz, Claire Sterling, et. al.The American cult of “Neo-conservatism” was spearheaded by the likes of Joseph McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover, and overseas by the likes of John Foster Dulles and Henry Kissinger.The sacred texts of the American Cold War “hawks” were George Kennan’s “Mister X” (1947), the Pentagon’s NSC-68, and the “Gaither Report”.The cult was comprised of apparatchiks of the military-industrial complex.

And so it goes: Even an official document by invidious government operatives can be seen as gospel (though NSC-68 had no “good news” to report; just the standard Messianic pablum of militarist American Exceptionalism and Cold War paranoia).

Some texts are simply the gibberish of demagogues attempting to be philosophical.For fawning proselytes, such tracts end up being the objects of bibliolatry.Examples of this in the political sphere would be Mao Tse-Tung’s **“Quotations From Chairman Mao”** (a.k.a. the “Little Red Book”) in China, Muammar Gaddafi’s **“The Green Book”** in Libya, and Saparmurat Niyazov’s **“Ruh-nama”** [“Book of the Soul”] in Turkmenistan…all of which are treated as de-facto holy books. {47}

The most malign examples of exalted trash-pulp include:

- Bolsheviks (followed by Stalinists and subsequent Soviet apparatchiks) with the writings of Vladimir Lenin [**Soviet Communist Party**]
- Nordicists and German "National Socialists" with Houston Stewart Chamberlain's "The Foundations of the 19th Century", Alfred Ernst Rosenberg's "The Myth of the 20th Century", Anton Drexler's "My Political Awakening", and–eventually–Adolph Hitler's "My Jihad" [**Nazism**] {35}
- North Korean citizens with the writings of Kim Il-Sung [**Juche**]
- The nexus of fundamentalist Christians and American Exceptionalists with the writings of Josiah Strong and Charles Peter Wagner; and, later, the writings of R.J. Rushdoony, Paul Weyrich, and John Hagee [**Christian Dominionism**]
- WASP-supremacists [i.e. Christian fascists] with Madison Grant's "The Passing of the Great Race" as well as the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" [**Aryan Brotherhood**; White nationalists; various other Neo-Nazi groups] {20}
- Judeo-supremacists [i.e. Judeo-fascists] with a skein of deranged writings [**Revisionist Zionism**] {23}

It is a stretch to call the expositions in this last list "sacred texts"; but such sanctified tracts were–and, unfortunately, still are–revered to varying degrees by True Believers who sought to rationalize their deranged ideologies.That is to say, many of these were DE FACTO holy books; as such doctrinal tracts as sources of propaganda.They were fetishized to various degrees in various ways. {26}

In every case, we always come back to "THIS is the book."Those who succumb to bibliolatry suppose that this is a true statement, but only for the right book.In other words: The claim seems plausible.So the question becomes: Which book is it?

This pre-supposition is where problems begin.Taking a broader view, we are confronted with two kinds of choices:

1. The matter of choosing the right dogmas
2. The matter of engaging in or rejecting dogmatism

The imperative to choose the right set of dogmas is based on a false choice.Once one recognizes the errancy of this line of thinking, the matter of WHICH book is THE ONE ends up being rather beside the point.For when one opts to make this false choice, one has committed to a one-way avenue that terminates in an epistemic cul-

de-sac.The catch to making such a commitment is the curtailment of further inquiry, as mandated by the claims the source makes about itself.Hence bibliolatry is primarily about self-sabotage.

The lesson here is simple: We never even need to get to the point at which we're asking which dogmas are the right ones.It helps to bear in mind: enigma and seduction often go hand-in-hand.So any text that manages to pass itself off as divinitory will have a powerful allure to those looking for grandiloquent answers and magical solutions.

Let's now turn to the primary means by which the content of sacred texts is conjured: Revelations delivered to a specially-selected individual…when nobody else is looking.



REVELATION RECEIVED WHILE IN ISOLATION

It only makes sense that a mantic text comes from a mantic person.When it comes to a self-proclaimed prophet according himself authority on spiritual and/or moral matters, the most oft-used gimmick is fashioning himself as a mouthpiece of higher powers.Here, the person claims to have been elected to speak (and act) on behalf of the designated deity–effectively serving as a divine afflatus.

In a sense, the anointed figure claims to have a direct hotline to the Creator of the Universe (or some other super-being); thus assigning to himself a nifty perk with which no other people in the world were worthy.Based on what?Well, according to the proprietary information being proffered.It's circular thinking with a radius of zero.

This fatidic mantle confers upon the claimant great privilege.For once one affixes the imprimatur of the designated deity to one's pronouncements, one has license to say / do whatever one wishes.When whatever one says or does is styled as "god's will", ANYTHING goes.So it should come as no surprise that there have been so many self-proclaimed mouthpieces for the godhead.

As is the case with any other gimmickry, the more people believe them, the more they are egged on.This was nothing new in the Judaic tradition.Who else claimed to be relaying messages from the Abrahamic deity?Hosea, Elisha, Ezekiel, and Ezra all claimed to have been commissioned by the godhead to pass along some propitious communique to Beth Israel.Such men were no different from "channelers" who claim to be relaying messages from the spirit realm…or shamans claiming to be relaying messages from deceased ancestors…or any other huckster claiming to have powers of divination.

Supplicants are so intoxicated by their own delusive thinking that they are blinded to its spuriousness–a spuriousness that everyone else can easily see.Consequently, they recognize the preposterousness of ALL OTHER beliefs in outlandish revelation tales; yet are perfectly willing to believe their own version is incontrovertible.So it is facile for most True Believers to blithely dismiss everyone else's cynosures as a bunch of crackpots…even most are unwilling to acknowledge their own creed is based on the same logic.

The refrain is familiar: A messenger-of-the-god(s) makes a special delivery to a specially designated individual.It is one of the oldest leitmotifs in human history.It goes back to Sumerian lore, in which the godhead, Eresh-kigal's "sukkal" [messenger] was "Namtar".

In the 8th century B.C., the Akkadian writer, Kabti-ilani Marduk penned an epic about the god of chaos, Erra, which he claimed was dictated to him by Erra himself.This may be one of the earliest instances of revealed text.Why, exactly, this deity chose HIM–and ONLY him–to deliver this importune message, Kabti-ilani never said.It was he who was selected; and that's all there was to it.

The rest of the world was not privy to this nebulous source of information.Everyone just had to take his word for it.And so they did.

There seems to be a universal proclivity to espouse some version of this plot-line.The same narrative device was later used with Mercury / Hermes in Ancient Greek mythology.In some of the earliest Persian mythology, the tale of the first shah (Manuchehr of Iran) tells of a visitation from an angel named “Spendarmad” [Arabized to “Esfandaramad”] who delivered a special message to his countrymen.Such a timely “revelation” was stupendously effective, as it enabled the presiding shah to defeat his adversary, King Afrasiab of Turan.In Hebrew lore, the arch-angel “[n]Uri-El” [God is My Light / Fire] visited Noah to notify him of the impending flood. {36}

In Mandaean (a.k.a. “Nasoraean” / “Nazarene”) lore, the divine emanation [from the world of light], “Hibil Ziwa” was conveyed to “Abat[h]ur”: progenitor of mankind… who is also seen as the coming Messianic figure (a.k.a. “Yoshamin”, son of the first emanation).In this Abrahamic theology, the godhead is “Hayyi R[ab]bi” [Great Living God; the divine source of life].The message was also passed along to “Ptahil”, who is seen as a kind of fallen angel.In this theology, the Holy Spirit is dubbed “Manda d’Hayyi”.All of this is recounted in the “Haran Gawaita” [Mandaic for “Inner Haran”].Note that the primary Mandaean patriarch is John the Baptist.(“Manda” is Aramaic for “knowledge”.)

From the Kagyu to the Nyingma lineages of Tibet (whose messengers are known as “tülkus” or “tertons”, each of whom receives revelations called “termas”), this theme is ubiquitous.(Most lineages are patriarchal–as with the various Tibetan lines: Shang-pa, Kargyu-pa, Ling-pa, Trung-pa, etc.)

This particular narrative trope is standard in hagiographical material.Propitious messages are delivered to mankind in a way that ONLY ONE person knows about.Revelations cannot be conveyed to everyone; only to a designated person–a cosmic ambassador of sorts.

In most cases, such episodes are said to have transpired in a place of seclusion.This leitmotif can be found in legends around the world.For example, the Tyrrhenian (Etruscan) prophet, Tages of Tarchuna, received his revelations in the middle of a field of crops.Jesus of Nazareth is said to have met the holy spirit during a solitary retreat in the garden of Gethsemane.

The Christian tradition continued to use variations on the revelation-in-isolation leitmotif.Saul of Tarsus claimed to have received his revelation on the road to Damascus.Later, the (Coptic) cenobitic monk, Pachomius of Thebes, is said to have received a revelation from an angelic messenger whilst secluding himself in a cave (according to the “Lausiac History” by Palladius of Galatia).Meanwhile, a prophet known as “Elkesai” claimed to have received revelations from an angel c. 100 A.D… a claim that lead to an Ebionite sect: the “Elkesaites”.

Indeed, in many cases, the revelation is claimed to have been delivered personally–secret knowledge channeled through the mouth / pen of the writer via preternatural means.Five examples from the Renaissance:

- In c. 1200, Marie of Oignies claimed to have had visions delivered to her from the Abrahamic deity…conferring on her special insights that were later recorded by her follower, Jacque of Vitry.
- In c. 1330, Richard Rolle of Yorkshire claimed to have had visioned delivered to him from the Abrahamic deity…which he eventually put into a book: **“Incendium Amoris”** [Fire of Love].
- Also in the 14th century, Julian of Norwich claimed to have received sixteen revelations from the Abrahamic deity…which she eventually put into a book: “Revelations Of Divine Love”.
- And in the late 14th century, the **“Kalam-i Saranjam”** (composed in Gorani) is believed by the Yarsan to be a verbatim transcription from the Abrahamic deity, as delivered to Kurdish Sultan Sahak. {17}
- In the 15th century, Margery Kempe of Norfolk claimed to have received messages from the Abrahamic deity; which she eventually published as **“The Book of Margery Kempe”**.

By the modern era, one would think that this leitmotif would have been sufficiently worn out.Alas: not so.

The English occultist, John Dee claimed to have had some of his books dictated to him by angels…with whom he communicated via the prodigious psychic powers he claimed to have.Queen Elizabeth believed him; and so kept him in her employ as an oracle of sorts.Queen Catherine de Medici of France would do the same with Michele de Nostredame (a.k.a. “Nostradamus”).Russian Tsar, Nikolas II would so the same with Grigori Rasputin.Thus even rulers can be rubes.

More recently, other hucksters claimed to have received their messages in private.Here are a dozen of the more well-known instances:

- In the early 18th century, Swedish mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg claimed that he had been appointed by the Abrahamic deity to write **“The Heavenly Doctrine”**: the Final Revelation for Christians.
- In the 1820’s, Joseph Smith lifted his revelation from a set of secret golden tablets on which were inscribed an ancient script that only he was able to decipher (with a set of special decoding goggles, provided to him personally).Per his own testimony, he was visited by the angel “Moroni” at a special location in upstate New York (a place in Ontario County, just outside of Palmyra; later anointed the “Sacred Grove”).(Revelation on a mountain-top was the preferred leitmotif. Alas, there were no mountains available in the area; so a hill sufficed.The Catskills aren’t quite the Himalayas, so Smith opted to work with what he had.)While on the hill (now referred to as Cumorah Hill), Smith was shown the hidden location of the aforementioned tablets.He then composed the **“Book(s) of Mormon”**.Astoundingly, there are now more than 15 million members of his church worldwide.
- In 1852, Baha-ullah wrote the aforementioned “Kitab-i Aqdas” [Most Holy Book] while in the prison at Acre, Palestine (or at Tehran, Iran).Where did he get the material?It was delivered to him by a “houri” [heavenly maiden].(There was no word on whether or not she had wide eyes or large breasts.)The resulting scripture also included the **“Suriy-i Haykal”**.
- In 1897, storied Siberian mystic, Grigori Rasputin, claimed to have received messages from the Virgin Mary, who appeared to him in private at Verkhoturye.(He also claimed visitations from the Russian saint, Simeon of Verkhoturye.)As mentioned, Rasputin managed to persuade the Russian (Romanov) Tsar that this was true.He boasted healing powers, with which he ingratiated himself by “treating” the Tsar’s son.Crowds of credulous followers hung on his every word.
- In 1904, famed occultist, Aleister Crowley claimed to have received his revelations in seclusion somewhere in Cairo, Egypt–thereby yielding a new religion, “Thelema”.Crowley insisted that he heard the disembodied voice of “Aiwass”, the angelic messenger of the Egyptian god, Horus.Over the course of the next three days, he wrote down everything the voice told him.(As mentioned earlier, he titled the transcript, the **“Liber AL vel Legis”**; Book of the Law.)As the mouthpiece for the vital message to mankind, he anointed himself the oracle for the “Aeon of Horus”.

- In 1920, Michael Agerskov composed the aforementioned **“Vandrer mod Lyset”** [Toward the Light] based on his private communiques with astonishingly erudite, other-worldly entities.
- In the inter-War years, American huckster, Edgar Cayce claimed to have received messages directly from Atlantis–a magical hotline that he invoked to explain his alleged psychic abilities.The messenger’s name?“Ra”.Thousands upon thousands believed him.
- Around the same time, Muhumusa (leader of a Rastafarian off-shoot in Rwanda / Uganda) claimed that she was possessed by Queen Nyabing.She subsequently founded the “Nyabingi” cult.
- In the 1940’s, Maria Valtorta of Campania composed **“Il Poema dell Uomo-Dio”** [The Poem of the Man-God; alt. “The Gospel As Revealed to Me”]; purportedly based on revelations she purportedly received in private, when nobody else was looking.
- In 1959, Scottish esotericist, Benjamin Creme claimed to be speaking on behalf of “Maitreya”: Avatar of the Age of Aquarius.
- Practitioners of the Slavic “Rodnover” Faith consider the **Book of Veles** to be a sacred text–based on ancient Slavonic inscriptions on planks of wood purportedly discovered by Yuri P. Mirolyubov near Saint Petersburg in the late 1980‘s.
- And as mentioned earlier, the “Ofudesaki” is alleged to be yet another message from the one true god (dubbed “Tenri-O-no-Mikoto” in Japanese).How was it transmitted to the world?You guessed it: via a messenger.According to the followers of “Tenrikyo”, the “chosen one” was a Japanese woman named Nakayama Miki (re-christened “Oyasama”).As it turns out, she required no angelic intermediary to “channel” the verses; god spoke DIRECTLY to her… when nobody else was around, of course.Tenrikyo now has over two million followers.

The examples go on and on.Korean demagogue “Ahn” Sahng-hong (who fashioned himself the Abrahamic prophet “Elijah”) founded “Witnesses of the Church of God” by claiming to be speaking on behalf of Jesus of Nazareth.Fellow Korean, Sun Myung Moon employed the same gimmick; and would pull the same stunt soon thereafter–anointing himself and his current wife (followed by his next wife) the “True Parents” of mankind…subsequently composing the **“Weolli Gangnon”** [Divine Principle].Thus the Church of Unification was born.There are now almost two million “Moonies” around the world.

Sometimes, more than one person shares the mantle of “messenger”.In Vietnam, Ngo Minh Chieu claimed to have received messages from the Creator of the Universe (dubbed “Duc Cao-Dai”).Cao-dai-ism was officially established on Christmas Eve 1926 by a trifecta of “mediums” (Pham Cong Tac, Cao Quynh Cu, and Cao Hoai Sang) who claimed to be channeling those communiques…thereby yielding their sacred scripture: the **“Phap-Chanh-Truyen”**.The Cao Dai Faith now boasts over SIX MILLION members worldwide.

New York City’s Helen Schucman claimed her inner voice was Jesus of Nazareth HIMSELF.New Jersey’s Elizabeth Clare Wulf (who changed her surname to “Prophet”) claimed to be in direct communication with the Abrahamic deity; and founded the “Church Universal and Triumphant”.The gimmick was also found in “The Great White Brotherhood”, the messenger of which is “Sanat Kumara” (who, we are told, dwells in Shambalah).Self-proclaimed prophets like “Serapis Bey” and “Koot Hoomi” continue to draw followers.

Though many did not believe the claims of these figures, few laughed out loud at these people.Instead, each of them enjoyed significant followings.(Most of the authors of these screeds were not obscure crackpots; they enjoyed significant followings at one point or another.)

Do some these accounts ring any bells?They should.Mohammed of Mecca made use of the same trope when he claimed to have received the final revelation from the Abrahamic deity (via a divine emissary).With Joseph Smith’s communiques with that same deity, the name of the divine emissary was changed (from the angel Gabriel to the angel Moroni).Otherwise, the key plot points remained roughly the same.Revelation-in-isolation is a timeless gimmick.

Interestingly, in Judaic lore, there is no difference between the concept of angle and that of messenger (the term in Classical Hebrew, “malakh” means both).These beings are variously referred to as “malakh elohim” [messengers of god] and “bene elohim” [sons / children of god].In the Book of Daniel (chapt. 7), the protagonist receives a dream-vision about the eschaton from the godhead.

We might bear in mind that this is not all about calculated deception.It is not uncommon for SELF-deception (i.e. delusion) to be involved.Indeed, many of these hoax-peddlers sincerely believed themselves to be who they claimed to be…even after it had been incontrovertibly proven that they were frauds. (!)The best way to sell a lie is to first believe it oneself.

Claiming to have received “wahi” / “futuha” (the Arabic terms for “revelation” used by Muslims) in a remote place, with nobody else around to see, was nothing new.The gimmick is as old as time.The claim that Mohammed of Mecca received the “final revelation” from the angel “Jibreel” [Gabriel] in a cave on Mount Hira follows a tradition that goes back to the Persian prophet, Zoroaster (a.k.a. “Zarathustra”).Zoroaster received his first divine revelation (“daena”) from the godhead, Ahura Mazda, on a mountain in Persia, at the age of thirty.He was visited by a divine envoy referred to as “Amesha Spenta” (later rendered “[a]Mahraspand”) as attested in the “Yasna Haptanghaiti”.The Avestan moniker “S[o]rush” / “Sraosha” is also used for an emissary of the divine (to wit: the means by which “daena” is relayed). {37}

And so when Nietzsche composed his parable about Zarathustra, he had the protagonist retreat to a secluded place in the mountains, whereupon he received Enlightenment.

The leitmotif also appears in the tale of Siddhartha Gautama of Lumbini (a.k.a. the Buddha) as well.He received his first illumination while meditating alone under a Ficus religiosa (a.k.a. “Bodhi tree”; i.e. tree of Enlightenment / Awakening) near the village of Senani in Uruwela [alt. “Uruvilva”], at a place now referred to as “Bodh Gaya”. {38}

In the Far East, the notion of a sacred tree–typically a fig tree–goes back to Vedic myths about the sacred fig tree: “as-vattha” [alt. “as-sattha”; “akshay[-a-]vat”] at Prayag.The earliest occurrence of that leitmotif goes back to ancient Sumeria, where the “huluppu” tree grew in Inanna’s garden.Sacred trees play a prominent role in folklore.Notable is the “uloko” / “iroko” tree in Yoruba / Igbo / Edo myth; and–most famously–“Yggdrasil” in Norse myth.

Revelation in caves then became part of the lore.Buddha is said to have attained nirvana in the Satta-parna-guha cave [alt. “Sapt[a]-parni”] at Rajgriah (modern-day Rajgir).Chandra-gupta is said to have achieved enlightenment in a cave at Sravana-belgola in southern India.Later, the Bengal “maha-siddha” [tantric sage], Tilopa[da] / Talika claimed to have received his revelations in a cave at Pashupatinath c. 1000 (where he is said to have attained “siddhi”; Buddha-hood); and soon thereafter passed the wisdom to his disciple, Naropa.

The “Longchen Nyingthig”, the revealed scripture of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism…which was revealed via the “terton”, Jigme Lingpa in the 18th century. (The scripture focuses on the path to liberation: “Dzogchen”.)As it happens, ALL “tertons” are said to have received their revelations in isolation. {43}And those places of seclusion are–you guessed it–typically in mountain caves; as with, say, the sacred Maratika cave in Nepal. {44}

The so-called “Cave of the Apocalypse” at Chora in Patmos has been a sacred site since the 10th century; fashioned as the site where the “Book of Revelation” was composed by “John”.Also note the 11th-century (Eastern Orthodox) monk, Anthony of Kiev, who is said to have received revelations in the caves of Mount Athos…a trope that dated back to Athanasius of Trabzon [alt. “Trebizond”].

Mountain peaks are a natural place to receive revelation, as it is (literally) higher than the rest of the world…as well as (literally) closer to the heavens.The lofty heights correlate with awe and majesty.As is well-attested in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Hebrew prophet, Moses, received his pivotal revelation while alone on a mountain (“Horeb”) in the Sinai.This idiom resonates with people.It’s not for nothing that, in his final speech (Memphis, 1968), Martin Luther King Jr. averred: “[God] has allowed me to go up to the mountain.And I have looked over and seen the Promised Land.”Here, the mountain represented an enlightened vantage point (while the Promised Land was an ideal).

As with so many other ubiquitous mythemes, the notion of a sacred mountain goes back to archaic Sumer.Indeed, the motif played a certain role in Sumerian–followed by Assyrian / Babylonian–myth.In Sumerian cosmology, the gateway associated with E-Kur (the axis mundi) was believed to be located in the Zagros mountains.Mountains were associated with Anu, Enki [alt. “An-ki”] and–most notably–Nin-hursag [“maiden of the mountain”]; as “hursag” was a term used for “mountain”.

The Sumerian god, Enlil was also associated with a mountain.The temple to him at Nippur was dubbed “E-Kur”.“E-” was used to refer to either a “house” or “mountain”; and is generally translated as “mountain house”.Thus: “E-Kur-igi-gal” [House / Mountain of Sight] and “E-Kur-ma” [Exalted House / Mountain].The sanctuary of Enlil (later, of Ishtar) was dubbed “E-nam-tila” [House / Mountain of Life / Creation].“E-Kur” was seen as the venue at which the gods held court–as with Mount Olympus in Greek mythology.

Ninurta, the Sumerian god of law, was also associated with a mountain.Mankind was given the divine law [“Mes”] on a mountain by his mother, Ninlil, consort of Enlil.Hence the temple dubbed “E-Kur-Mes-ikil” [House / Mountain of Pure Law].The sanctuary of Ninlil was later referred to as “Hursag-kala-ma”. {40}

We find the fascination with mountains in Greek mythology.What the Greeks called Mount Kasios was Mount Hazzi (the home of Teshub) in Hurrian / Hittite lore; and Mount Sapan[u] (the home Baal; rendered “Zaphon” in Hebrew) in Akkadian / Canaanite / Phoenician lore.This particular played a pivotal role in various religions throughout the region for thousands of years.In Ancient Greece, Mount Olympus was seen as home of the gods.The apotheosis of the legend of Prometheus occurred on Mount Strobilus (now called Mount Elbrus).Zeus was born on Mount Kynthos on the island of Delos.Dionysus was said to have been born either on Mount Pramnos on the island of Ikaria (or, in other versions, on a mountain in the faraway, mythical land of Nysa).The Carians believed their godhead resided on the mountain of Herakleia, at Latmus.

As with ancient Greece, some people of the Far East assumed their gods dwelled on mountain peaks. Hindus believe that Mount Kailash / Kailasa (a.k.a. “Mount Meru”) is home to Shiva. Vajrayana Buddhists believe that the Buddha “Cakra-samvara” (a.k.a. “Demchok”) dwells on its peak. And Tibetan Buddhists believe it is where Guru Rinpoche (a.k.a. “Padma-sabhava”) achieved enlightenment.

The great Jain “tirthankara”, Maha-vira–and even the Buddha himself, Siddhartha Gautama–was said to have retreated to a mountain named “Gijjha-kuta” [alt. “Gadhra-kuta”; “Vulture Peak”] at Girivraj [later dubbed “Rajagaha”; alt. “Rajgir”] in Bihar…where he received further enlightenment. Jains also believe that the first “tirthan-kara”, Rish-abha-deva, attained “moksha” on the aforementioned Mount Meru.

In Abrahamic lore, Elijah’s alter was on Mount Caram-El.Isaiah refers to a sacred mountain in chapter 14.The (Coptic and Syriac Melchite) Saint Anthony’s monastery in the Red Sea Mountains of Eastern Egypt were seen as a sanctuary…especially by monks from Scetis, Nitria, and Kellia.The use of the “revelation received on a mountain” trope persisted thereafter.“Itabyrium” (Mount Tabor in Galilee) is said to be where Jesus of Nazareth was revealed to be the “son of god”.

Other sacred mountains are THEMSELVES mythical–as with “Hara Berezaiti” in Zoroastrian lore and Kunlun Mountain in Chinese mythology.Such places were seen as the “axis mundi”: the center of the world (as well as the nexus of the earthly world and the divine realm).It is not for nothing that in so many religious traditions, the “temenos” is a mountain.Consequently, mountains often play a key role in pilgrimages.

So what of COMMANDMENTS?According to Sumerian myth, the three clay tablets of Destiny–bequeathed by Enlil–established the divine law (ref. the Gudea cylinders of Lagash c. 2125 B.C.)Hence the aforementioned “sukkal” [messenger], “Namtar”…who claimed to be delivering this propitious missive to mankind.

In subsequent Babylonian myth, Tiamat bestows the tablets to the legendary figure, “Kingu” (ref. the “Enuma Elish”).Thus the general motif of DIVINE LAW (being delivered in a special way) dates back to the 3rd millennium B.C.Later, in Babylonian lore, the son of the godhead (Marduk), “Nabu” delivered divine revelations on stone tablets–from which all wisdom was derived.

In Egyptian lore, Osiris dictated the divine law onto stone tablets.In Greek lore, the laws of Zeus were delivered to King Minos of Crete.Where?On Mount Ida in Knossos. (Minos was known to sometimes retreat to seclusion in caves.)Mycenaean tales of Dionysus (Roman: “Bacchus”) of Thebes involve him receiving the gods’ laws on Mount Kithairon.Other legends involved Rhea (later “Cybele”), mother of the gods, retreating to a sacred cave located on Mount Ida…thereby bringing forth the “Dactyls” (considered progenitors of the Greeks).

Such fantastical tales were invariably inspiration for the Judaic story of Moses.Indeed, by the time the Torah was composed by Babylonian scribes during the Exilic period, the divinely-appointed man receiving divine law (alt. revelation) on a mountain was a familiar motif.The divine giver-of-laws could also be found in Egypt with Osiris and in the Olmec / Aztec / Maya civilizations with the plumed serpent, Quetzalcoatl.In Vedic lore, the “Smriti” was delivered to Manu on a mountain.The Vedanta (Hindu) sage, Vashistha was able to bring forth the (Rajput) “Agnivansha” people by appealing to the Vedic god, “Agni” at the peak of “Arbuda-anchal” (alt. “Arbuda-ranya”; a.k.a. Mount Abu).

The notion of making a compact with the godhead has myriad occurrences throughout history, and around the world.Oftentimes, the mytheme was appropriated from antecedent cultures.The covenant between the Abrahamic deity

and the Hebrews–as delivered to Moses–was inspired by the covenant between Assyrian King Esarhaddon and King Baal of Tyre c. 675 B.C.(On the sacred amulets of Hadatu, we read about the Eternal One's covenant, made by the sons of El.)

But in the Abrahamic tradition, the most well-known version of the mountain-motif is that of Moses–receiving the ten commandments from the Abrahamic deity on Mount Horeb–later referred to as "Mount Sinai".After the tales of Moses, the routine of receiving revelation on a mountain was repeated myriad times in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

As mentioned, the Prophet Elijah claimed to have received his revelations while in a cave on a mountain (also Mount Horeb in some versions; though usually designated as Mount Car[a]m-El); as did his disciple, Elisha.And we are told by Isaiah that the holiest place is mount Zaphon, where "El" convenes his assembly (14:13).

The author of the **"Book of Jubilees"** claimed his text was composed OVER A THOUSAND YEARS earlier…by Moses himself.But how had Moses gotten the information?It was delivered to him by the "Angel of Presence"…who, we are told, had been commissioned by the Abrahamic deity to dictate the book to him.That text lay dormant for over a millennium before a Pharisee claimed to have re-discovered it in the 2nd century B.C…just in time for it to be used by the Hasmoneans as propaganda (along with the newfangled "Book of Daniel").

Perhaps the closest precursor to the Mohammedan tale of "Laylat al-Qadr" ("Night of Power") on "Gar Hira" was the Thracian / Dacian legend of Zalmoxis.This great Anatolian prophet retreated to a cave on Mount Kogaionon for three years.It was in that mountain hideaway that he received the revelations that he would deliver to the Getae.

By the time this plot-line was recycled by the Arabs, it had become somewhat of a cliche.The tale of Mohammed's "Night of Power" was likely cribbed from tales of the Abrahamic prophet, Zechariah–who was visited by a divine emissary, whereupon he experienced a series of propitious visions over the course of an auspicious night.The formula is quite simple, and astoundingly effective when the target audience is sufficiently credulous, and looking for someone to proffer an inspiring message.

Even etiological myths often involve mountains–as with Mount Sinjar in the Yazidi creation myth.So it should come as little surprise that mountains–real or imagined–play a common role in tales of prophethood.This makes perfect sense, as their prominence on the physical landscape is symbolic of spiritual prominence.Indeed,

their elevation is as metaphorical as it is literal. {39}The mountaintop emulates the vantage point of divinity (from on high).For at such heights, one would seem to be closer to the divine; and one can see more of the world.Moreover, one is “above” worldly concerns; removed from the petty distractions that dominate the world below.The metaphor also works because it is a difficult place to reach; one must struggle to get there.It is unheard of for popinjays to claim revelation in gullies or ravines.After all, a ditch is not the sort of place people are inclined to exalt.

The “revelation in a cave on a mountain” leitmotif is not limited to the West.Venturing to the Far East, we encounter it over and over again.It was also used in Jainism, with the ancient tale of the Digambara monk, Dharasena.This “acharya” relayed the key portions of the **“Anga Viahapannatti”** [alt. “Vyakhya Prajnapti”] and **“Anga Ditthivada”** [alt. “Drstivada”] to his disciples (Pushpadanta and Bhutabali) in the 1st century A.D.As the story goes, he received–and then conveyed–the revelations in the “Chandra Gupha” [“Moon Cave”] located on Mount Girnar in Gujarat. {41}

In Tibet, there is a tradition of “revelations” that yield texts called “terma”–especially in the Bon and Nyingma traditions.Prophets (revealers) who receive such revelations (via a process dubbed “Nang-jang”), typically in secluded places in the mountains, are referred to as “Tertons”.The most famous “terton” [prophet] was the Kagyu monk, Karma Lingpa, to whom was dictated the holy book of Nyngma Buddhism, the aforementioned “Bardo Thodol” (a.k.a. the “Tibetan Book of the Dead”) in the 14th century.The revelation was purportedly based on the “lost” revelations of Padma-sambhava of Oddiyana / Kalinga [“Lotus-Born”; a.k.a. “Guru Rinpoche”] from the 8th century.Yes: He too received his revelation on a mountain.Which mountain?“Daklha Gam-po” [Mount Gam-po Dar], the place that was designated as a “temenos” by the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gam-po around the same time that Mohammed of Mecca is said to have had his “Night of Power”. (!)

In the 2nd century A.D., a Han mystic named “Zhang Daoling” founded a cult of “Taoism” (many of its principles diametrically opposed to the original philosophy by the same name; i.e. genuine Taoism).He probably thought he was being rather original when he presented his tale of revelation-in-isolation.As the story goes, in the year 142, he retreated to Mount Heming (in Dayi)…whereupon the messenger (“Taishang Laojun”) delivered a revelation to him: the “Doctrine of the Orthodox One [via] the Authority of the Alliance”.According to this charismatic Chinese prophet, whilst in the mountain cave, the deity bestowed upon him the title, “Celestial Master”.

The revelation was couched as a WARNING (something that might sound familiar to Muslims) in which a series of cataclysms would be visited upon mankind on the appointed day-of-reckoning…after which only 240,000 “chosen” people would be allowed to survive (who would then re-populate the world during the prophesied era of “Great Peace”).Zhang Daoling claimed to be fixing the corruptions that had set into the Taoist tradition since its founding.(That schtick should also sound familiar.)

Other Chinese believe that the Charya Tantra (a.k.a. the “Upa Tantra”) was handed down on Mount Jizu in Yunnan, China.

We might also note Buddhists’ handling of the three “Pitaka” of the Pali Canon and of the “Buddha-vacana”.These works are alleged–by some–to be documentation of the “Word of the Buddha” (i.e. the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, from the 6th century B.C.)The Maha-samghika writings and the Mula-sarvasti-vada writings are both considered to be authentic records of the “Buddha-vacana”, but hardly claim to be verbatim transcripts.The same goes for the “Pitaka”.Consequently, according to level-headed Buddhists, to fixate on specific words is to miss the entire point OF those words.This is why there is no “issue” about translating the original Sanskrit / Pali into English…or into any other language.

Manichaeism was a syncretism of Zoroastrianism and Christianity, with some Hindu and Buddhist influences.Mani called his Faith “Hope”, which emphasized redemption / salvation, and was based on the dichotomy between good (light) and evil (darkness).In many ways, Mohammed of Mecca reprised the narrative pioneered by Mani.How so?Mani proclaimed the revelations he preached had been delivered to him in installments by a celestial entity, and were the culmination of all previous revelations in ALL the world’s religions.He was elected to rectify antecedent revelations that had been corrupted by those who had gone astray.This should oddly familiar to Muslims.{42}

“Mani” insisted that he was receiving secret messages from a celestial entity (his “heavenly twin”)…when no one else was looking, of course.He thus fashioned himself the “paraclete”–based on the Koine Greek term “parakletos”, which has sometimes been interpreted as a reference to the coming Messiah (as mentioned in the Gospel of John 16:7-13).It is more commonly interpreted as the coming of the Holy Ghost at the Pentecost; per the following verses (16:12-14), which refer to the pending arrival of the “Spirit of Truth”. {45}

In the 3rd century, Roman Emperor Aurelian was visited by “Sol Invictus” via a vision.Unsurprisingly, he received the revelation when nobody was around.This visitation inaugurated a new sun-god cult.Roman Mithra-ism promptly ensued.

Then there was the notorious charlatan, Augustine of Hippo, who received his revelation (so he said) while sitting under…surprise, surprise…a fig tree.A message was delivered to him through a child-like voice that implored: “Pick it up and read.Pick it up and read.”Sound familiar?It should.According to Mohammedan lore, the first words delivered to the self-proclaimed prophet on Mount Hira by the divine envoy were, “Read. Read.”(The Syriac term for “read” and “recite” were similar: “Q-R-N”.Hence the moniker for Islam’s holy book.)

The Taoist prophet, Kou Qian-zhi (founder of the Northern sect of the Way of the Celestial Masters) received his revelation on Mount Hua c. 400.In some sects of Buddhism, Mount Kailash[a] and Machapuchare are each considered cosmically significant.

We encounter similar motifs in Africa.For the Yoruba, god’s messenger was Oduduwa of Ife.Meanwhile, subsequent holy people are not singular in importance.It is routine in Shamanistic practice for appointed people to speak on behalf of the god(s).The catch with Shamanism is that there are many such people, and they occur in every generation.That is to say: They are mere vessels, provisionally endowed with the preternatural ability to channel messages; they are not necessarily historically-significant figures.

It should be noted that belief in “mediums” (those with the magical ability to channel messages from “beyond” the empirical world) does not necessarily involve deities.Often, it involves communiques with (alleged) spirits (as with seances) or with demons (as with exorcisms).In modern times, divine envoys are a convenient shtick.The idea is that a supernatural missive requires a supernatural courier.One can also ask “Dada” Lekhraj Kripalani: his messenger was named “Shiv[a]”…

- or Alice Ann Bailey: her messenger was named “Djwal Khul”
- or Helena Blavatsky: her messenger was named “Master Morya”
- or Richard Zenor: his messenger was named “Agasha”
- or Jane Roberts: her messenger was named “Seth”
- or J.Z. Knight: her messenger is named “Ramtha”
- or Tom Kenyon: his messenger is named “Hathor”
- or Esther Hicks: her messengers are–collectively–named “Abraham”

- or Ramon Stevens: his messenger is named “Alexander”
- or Carla L. Rueckert: her messenger was named “Ra”
- or Sufian Chaudhary: his messenger is Archangel “Uriel”
- or Lee Carroll: his messenger is named “Kryon”
- or “Kahu” Fred Sterling: his messenger is named “Kirael”

…or ME.MY messenger is Mr. Spaghetti-Pants…who I’ve just made up, but will now claim has given me the most important information ever given to any human in history.

In the modern age, the leitmotif can be mapped to space-age themes.Hence the roster of self-proclaimed “contactees” like Ivo A. Benda–who claimed to have been in communication with “Ashtar Sheran”.Other examples:

- George van Tassel–who claims to be in communication with fantastical extraterrestrial beings: “Ashtar” and “Solgonda”.
- Darryl Anka claims his extraterrestrial source is named “Bashar”.
- Marshall Vian Summers claims his source is a nebulous cabal known as “the Unseen Ones”.
- Geoffrey Hoppe claims to be channeling “Tobias” of the “Crimson Council” (hence his Crimson Circle Energy Company).
- Gary Renard is in communion with “Arten” and “Pursah”: otherworldly beings who will communicate ONLY with him because they don’t want their message to be corrupted by others.
- Bernard Perona (a.k.a. “Drunvalo Melchizedek”) claims to be getting the inside scoop from “Thoth”…who’s information is taken from the mythical “Akashic Records”.

Some prophets dispense with the “channeling” gimmick altogether–as with Sathya Sai Baba, who claimed to be the reincarnation of “Sai Baba of Shirdi”.He managed to accumulate hundreds of thousands of followers–THOUSANDS of whom testify that they witnessed his miracles first-hand.

Ask ANY acclaimed channeler (alt. spiritual “medium”) who claims to be “in touch with” some mysterious entity “from beyond”, and one will surely be treated to a tall-tale crafted for the next sycophant-in-waiting.Charismatic leaders make use of this schtick ad nauseam.Whether a numinous source (which bestows upon her/him proprietary wisdom) or an angelic being from Abrahamic theology, the gimmick is the same.

Humans are predisposed to posit a spirit-world of some kind.Indeed, the notion of “spiritual beings” is an alluring one.Moreover, the prospect of being able to communicate with some kind of spirit-world holds tremendous appeal.Ergo the ubiquity of animism in primitive cultures.So it is that other-worldly realms, populated by mystical beings or ancestors, are what the hotline connects certain people to. {46}

Homo sapiens seem to be hardwired to be captivated by ideas of the paranormal.Even in the modern age (when we should know better), many are enthralled by the prospect of communicating with numinous entities (hence the existence of Britain’s “Society For Psychical Research”).Religion simply takes this motif to extremes.

A designated mouthpiece for god’s message to mankind: The theme is commonplace throughout human history.In each instance enumerated here, the divine message was received while the “chosen one” had adjourned to a place of solitude.As we have seen, there is nothing unique about Mohammed’s tale.(To recapitulate: A convicted con-man, Joseph Smith would attest to this–via his encounter with Moroni–over twelve centuries later.The golden tablets were a special added touch.Such narrative rigamarole is useful; as it serves to add a patina of mystique to whatever material is being peddled.)

And so it goes: The notion of a “messenger” (a specific person who is uniquely positioned to provide a message to everyone else, typically via a divine envoy; per divine ordinance) has captivated mankind since time immemorial.At first blush, the idea that someone might have privileged access to Truth seems remotely plausible.

What is odious about consecrated tracts that claim to be THE SOURCE is their finality.Sacrosanctity is usually a red flag.Contending that all major issues are resolved–once and for all–is inimical to the spirit of critical inquiry; and antithetical to progress in general.We are expected to believe that the ultimate “Truth” has already been spelled out; just follow the instructions you’ve been given.(No need to investigate further.From here on out, all we have left to do is heed that last revelation.)Consequently, introspection–the logic goes–is only for facilitating piety, not for critical reflection.After all, the work has already been done for us. {48}

Many are seduced by the claim: “Herein lay all the answers!”Alas.“This is a work in progress” doesn’t have the same ring to it.Suffice to say: “I may be mistaken on certain points; further inquiry needs to be done” is not an effective marketing pitch.But, of course, this is an implicit disclaimer for any book that is worth reading.

Pseudo-concepts like “ancient wisdom” (as if genuine wisdom weren’t timeless) are bandied about in order to augment the mysteriousness of the drivel.The contention is that claims are somehow “better” when they are OLD.So the thinking goes: If it’s ancient, then it MUST have some credence.Hence the “I have all the answers” gimmick is more compelling if the source of the insight derives from an (allegedly) ancient SOURCE.

Usually, there is a tactic of “intentional obscurity” employed in order to persuade the target audience that they mustn’t even attempt to fathom the explanation for this fantastical occurrence.The proposal that “You can’t possibly do this yourself” often serves to further enrapture those who really, really want to believe.The upshot of the charade is simple: “It’s all beyond your grasp.And that is precisely why you need THIS for guidance.”

It is no secret that we ALL want to “get the scoop” from someone who, as it were, “has the inside track”.The catch, though, is that the “inside track” must be shrouded in enigma–lest the need for a “chosen one” evaporate.The formula here is simple: Create the fog, then provide a beacon.This ruse usually works like a charm–especially for those suffering from existential vertigo.As with ANY scam, credulous audiences rally around (and fawn over) anyone who is convincing.Just ask the impresarios of Thelema, Tenrikyo, and Cao Dai…or the numerous mystics who claim to have channeled the the archangel “Michael”.

Michael, it seems, is the envoy-of-choice for many of those engaged in this sham.This was the case with the aforementioned John Dee–who insisted the material he peddled could be validated by THAT particular arch-angel.We also saw this with the Romanian fascist ideologue, Cornelius Zelea Codreanu–who claimed to have been visited by “Michael”.Codreanu inaugurated his own messianic (anti-Semitic, fascist) “Legionary” cult with the imprimatur of this oft-invoked celestial entity.The story is a familiar one: The supernatural courier informed the aspiring demagogue that he had been chosen by god to be Romania’s savior.(Ring any bells?)Codreanu thus saw his mission as ushering in a new, glorious epoch for the nation…and

thereby bringing about the second coming of Christ.Hence his creation of the Romanian (Eastern Orthodox) “Christian Defense League” (later rebranded the “Iron Guard”).

The invocation of divine Providence is de rigueur for panjandra.The go-to intermediary has often been Michael; but for Mohammed of Mecca it was Gabriel, and for Joseph Smith it was Moroni.For me, it’s Mr. Spaghetti-Pants.

Magic exists wherever one wants to see it.(That’s part of what makes magic so magical.)So many have been bamboozled by seemingly miraculous pablum–from Nostradamus’ **“The Prophesies”** to the latest self-help drivel.At the end of the day, the easiest person to fool is oneself.One thing that the True Believer (read: hidebound ideologue) is utterly incapable of doing is being skeptical about his own most cherished convictions (i.e. those he most depends on, and is consequently most addicted to).The religious fundamentalist derives his fundamentals from SOMEWHERE.

This is especially so when the coveted dogmas are articulated in an anointed tome.Every movement has its zealots.And every zealot is enabled by material that has been spelled out and rendered inextricably sacrosanct.For it is that sacrosanctity that SEEMS TO empower him (that is: to give his beliefs ballast and vitality).Such scripture serves an important psychological purpose: It helps the True Believer rationalize the zeal (read: bull-headedness) and fealty (read: closed-mindedness) on which his continued hyper-dogmatism depends.For he need only refer to a particular text and say, “See here on page 11!Its says…”End of discussion.

As the above list of hallowed tracts attests, history is littered with a long trail of sanctified poppycock.Any fanatical following thinks that every other followings’ sanctified drivel is a hoax…even as it is thoroughly convinced that its own sanctified drivel is genuine.(“The OTHER prophets were all impostors; but OUR prophet was the real thing.THEIR beliefs are just superstitions; but OUR beliefs are bona fide revelations.”)What better way to engender collective narcissism than a specific book that all compatriots can share to the exclusion of everyone else?

The notion that a scripture is not man-made, but is divinely authored began with the Vedas; using a concept in Sanskrit: “apauru-sheya”.Such “shabda” [“words”] were dubbed “shruti” [that which is recited / heard].Recall that “Qur’an” means “that which is recited”.The idea of sacred scripture conceptualized as divine speech–conveyed via a human proxy–goes back millennia.In Vedic (Hindu) lore, the

“Mahabharata” was dictated to Vyasa.In Persian (Zoroastrian) lore, the five “Gathas” were dictated to Zoroaster.Some claims are blatantly fraudulent, as with the “Book of Revelation” by John of Patmos, who composed anti-Roman propaganda by cribbing imagery from the Book of Daniel and Ezekiel from the Hebrew Bible. {29}

Religious or not, when someone starts treating a particular book as an instruction manual for life, it’s a recipe for disaster.That’s not how wisdom in gleaned.Living life isn’t like putting together a store-bought mechanism.There are no instruction manuals for probity, let alone for being human.Like the Torah for Jews and the New Testament for Christians, the Koran is part of Muslims’ cultural heritage.Nothing more; nothing less.

In the final analysis, “All you have to do is read this ONE BOOK” is a daffy claim.That’s not how edification works.As any (sufficiently well-read) bookworm knows, all wisdom could not possibly be captured in a single book–or even an entire shelf of tomes–no matter how sagaciously composed any of them might be.To suppose the contrary is just as fantastical as presuming that all wisdom could be captured in the preachments of any particular person (a topic that will be explored in the next essay).

Whatever there is to discover about the nature of Reality can be discovered–and validated–independently of the existence of (or having read) any given text.For Reality is what it is irrespective of any particular representation of it; and it is there, waiting to be understood as it is; as well as appreciated for what it is.We only demean the divine by supposing it can be distilled in a specific tract.

* * *

FOOTNOTES:

{1“Everything we’ll ever need to know is RIGHT HERE, in these pages.It’s all the knowledge we’ll ever need.”A similar mistake is often made regarding blockbuster “self help” books.The point that is rarely made: Nobody ever became a better person because he read a particular book.Nevertheless, some books sell millions and millions of copies by promising to show the way to happiness…or success…or fortune.This is simply another version of the same gimmick: A book promising to unlock the secrets of the universe.Sober minds realize such claims are risible; for that is not how wisdom is gleaned.In such books, there may be some key insights offered here and there; but those insights needn’t come from any specific place.If

one person knew enough to put it in one book, others are capable of figuring it out on their own, but other means.Nobody has an inside channel–a special hotline–to the source of life's most important insights.}

{2This work is the basis for "Merkabah" ["throne chariot"] mysticism–a sumptuous buffet of zany dogmas that passed for a collection of insights into the inner workings of the cosmos (with a particular focus on the musings of Ezekiel).The material seems to have begun in the early 2nd century with the mystic, Akiva ben Yosef of Judea.}

{3The Zohar became the basis for the "Lurianic" Kabbalah tradition via the Ashkenazi rabbi, Isaac ben Solomon Luria of Galilee–who lived in the 16th century.It seems to have become the flagship book for those smitten with Kabbalah today; though their daffy superstitions are little more sophisticated than those who read daily horoscopes.}

{4"The Orchard of Pomegranates" and "The Tree of Life" aren't to be confused with the books of esoterica by the same names composed by the Hermetic Kabbalah icon, Israel Regardie, in the 1930's.}

{5H.P. Lovecraft even invented a fictional language for his fictional god, Cthulhu: "R'Lyehian".He did this because he recognized the integral role a liturgical language often plays in cult activity.The Necronomicon is a reminder that a book does not even need to exist in order for people to become obsessed with it.Cult activity can form around the most outlandish of farce–so long as it is sufficiently captivating / compelling.}

{6A distinction should be made between the WORSHIP of a particular text (e.g. Haredi with the Torah; and–even more blatantly–Muslims with the Koran) and the fetishization of a certain corpus of text (as with, say, Harry Potter mania).The latter is a more a matter of obsession–a broad phenomenon that typically involves delusive thinking.In extreme cases, that can take the form of bibliolatry.To fetishize something is not necessarily to worship it; but it is to become chronically preoccupied with it–and even bewitched by it.Put another way: Fetishization is a matter of making the object-of-fixation out to be far more than it really is.}

{7Insofar as one fixates on one particular book (nay, spends one's life obsessing over JUST THAT BOOK), one will tend not to read many–or ANY–other books.Insofar as one fetishizes a book, one will be disinclined to investigate much else–for what's the point if all else is ipso facto inferior?}

{8While both are means to salvation, the Word-made-flesh and the Word-made-text serve two different LITURGICAL purposes.The former incarnation is a vehicle for vicarious atonement (from original sin).The latter incarnation is more a memorandum on how to remain in god's good graces.Either way, the message is: You are damned if you don't believe.}

{9The earliest script in which Classical Arabic was written–as it was being developed–was the Syriac-based Kufic script. See my essay: The Syriac Origins Of Koranic Text.}

{10The "Koran" [Recitations] is the primary holy book of Islam–and, pace the "sahih" Hadith, most would consider it THE ONLY holy book.For it is purported to be a verbatim transcript of the Abrahamic deity's speech–as conveyed to the messenger, Mohammed, by the archangel Gabriel, in installments (between 610 and 632).In terms of treating the Koran as a message delivered to Mohammed of Mecca, we might look to the long history of this (extremely seductive) trope.}

{11The legend of Merlin was based on the Caledonian prophet, Myrddin Wyllt of Carmarthen.This mysterious Welsh figure is supposed to have written the "Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin" ["Black Book of Carmarthen"] and the "Llyfr Coch Hergest" ["Red Book of Hergest"].}

{12This Etruscan "Book of Revelations" was comprised of the Libri Haruspicini and the Acherontici.The corpus also included the Libri Haruspicini, Libri Fulgurales, and Libri Rituales (which was itself comprised of the Libri Acherontici, Libri Ostentaria, and Libri Fatales).Also note the revelations of the prophetess, Vegoia: the "Libri Vegoici", which included the aforementioned "Libri Fulgurales".}

{13The oldest was the "Satkhanda-gama" (alt. "Pratham Shrut-Skandh"), written by the "acharya" Dharasena, from the 1st century.Also from that time was the "Kasaya-pahuda", written by "acharya" Gunadhara.Then came the "Panch[a] Para-magama" by "acharya" Kundakunda.}

{14"The Treasury Of Knowledge" was composed by the Tibetan Buddhist sage, Jamgön Kongtrül in the 19th century.}

{15Beta Israel are Ethiopian Jews (a.k.a. “Falashas”) who go back to the era of Aksum and the Abyssinians.Their version of the creed is NOT rabbinical.They have priests [kohenim], not rabbis.They still perform sacrifices.They revere the ark of the covenant.Lore is found in the “Kebra Nagast”, which traces the legacy of Menelik, son of Solomon via Sabaean queen, Makeda (a.k.a. the “Queen of Sheba”).}

{16Such recognition needn’t detract from the fact that each book is fascinating in its own right.That each has its own signature trains makes each interesting in unique ways.The problem is that each community sees its own book as NE PLUS ULTRA, attributing to it cosmic significance, entailing that it is somehow ONTOLOGICALLY unique.}

{17The Yarsan are also known as the “Ahl-i Haqq” [People of Truth], which–like Yazidism–was inspired by the pre-Islamic Kurdish religion, “Yazdan-ism” [cult of angels].}

{18Ancillary Note: There are some “impostor” holy books, such as those falsely ascribed to the Yazidis: the “Mishefa Resh” [Black Book] and “Keteba Jelwe” [Book of Revelation / Illumination; a.k.a. “Kitab al-Jilwah”].But in another sense, MOST holy books are impostors–in that they are purporting to be something that they are not.The traditional Christian canon, for example, claims to be a record of JoN; yet it is largely a concoction of various authors, created generations after the protagonist’s death.The same goes for the Hebrew Bible and the Koran.}

{19This might be referred to as the “Refer To Page 11” syndrome.Those who act ethically primarily–or, as the case may be, ONLY–because they are following orders are not acting morally.That is: To perform a good act as a result of obeying a command is not a moral act.Using the rationalization, “Because it said to do so in this book” or “Because X told me to do so” is not the mark of morality; it is the mark of servility.Obeisance is not rectitude.The supposition that one would not–nay, COULD not–conduct oneself ethically BUT FOR hewing to such-and-such directives is a plaintive admission that one is a moral imbecile.Specific directions, whether issuing from an instruction manual or an instructor, are–at best–moral prosthetics; and are appropriate for juveniles and pets.Nobody ever became a better person for having read a specific book; or by having subscribed to this or that sacred doctrine.Dogmatism has never engendered erudition, nor has it ever been the basis for probity.Quite the contrary: Order-following is an abdication of moral responsibility.After all: Morality is based on autonomy, not on heteronomy.}

{20Most infamously of all, the screed known as **“The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”** was created at the beginning of the 20th century by unknown Russian authors in an attempt to rationalize Aryan supremacy by creating paranoia about a purported conspiracy amongst the world’s Jewry.(The vehemently anti-Semitic diatribe was likely commissioned by the Czars as propaganda against the Bolsheviks.The general idea is that there is a global network of diabolical Jewish impresarios bent on managing the world, and that all geo-political and economic activity is ultimately controlled by this hidden cabal. It thus combined the fascination with sensational conspiracy theories with anti-Semitism, offering a scapegoat for all of society’s ills.)A variation on such cultic activity are American white nationalists (spec. WASPs) with the writings of William Joseph Simmons and Thomas Dixon Jr., who’s material served as holy writ for the Klu Klux Klan.The sacred text of the KKK was–no kidding–called the **“Kloran”**.Propaganda could also be found in works of fiction like **“The Turner Diaries”** by William Luther Pierce (as “Andrew MacDonald”) and **“Imperium”** by Francis Parker Yockey (as “Ulick Varange”).}

{21It was comprised of the “Ars Goëtia”, “Ars Theurgia Goëtia”, “Ars Paulina”, “Ars Almadel”, and “Ars Notoria”. The term, “goëtia” derived from the Greek term for “demon summoning”.There is debate about the distinction between a grimoire and books on goëtia and theurgy (e.g. Hermeticism).All deal with the occult; as they involve what is generally known as “black magic” or “sorcery”.Some might protest that such texts have little to do with holy books.The fact of the matter is, though, that ALL of them proffer pontifications on the supernatural (esp. conjuring).And they often serve as catalysts–nay, guidebooks–for cult activity.To wit: All of it is equally absurd.The point here is that similar psychical mechanisms are at work whether one is proffering explanations–and issuing incantations–from a grimoire or a holy book.In both cases, hooked audiences are entranced.The audience is subsequently inclined to engage in dogmatism according to the contents of one or another consecrated source.It would be a mistake to underestimate the seriousness with which True Believers take such texts.Bibliolatry takes many forms.From the Theosophical Society to the Watchtower Society, the same socio-psychological machinery is operative.}

{22The initial pseudo-historical founding documents are known as the “Old Charges”, the legitimation of which is predicated on an embellished historiography of the Masonic lodge’s origins.Most notable is the so-called “York Legend”.George Payne and James Anderson composed **“The Constitutions of the Free-masons”**

c. 1720.Laurence Dermott composed **“Ahiman Rezon”** c. 1756.As with any apocrypha in a cult’s origin story, these accounts contain elements of historical truth peppered with an ample dose of spurious claims.}

{23Revisionist Zionism has also been referred to as “Kahanism” after one of its patriarchs: Meir David Kahane of Brooklyn, New York.Ze’ev Jabotinsky was the bellwether for Judeo-fascist ideology–most notably: his **“Letter On Autonomism”**.Revisionist Zionism cannot be boiled down to any particular text; as the roster of Judeo-fascist expositors is disturbingly long.Here are TEN MORE of the most notable: Abraham Isaac “ha-Kohen” Kook, Gush Emunim (ref. his **“Book of the Faithful”**), Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (ref. his **“Drishat [t]Zion”**), Samuel Klein (ref. his **“Sefer ha-Yishuv”**), Judah ben Solomon Chai Alkalai, Moses Leib Lilienblum, Ben-Zion Dinur, Abba Ahimeir, Zvi Yehuda Kook, and Avraham Shapira (of the notorious “Mercaz ha-Rav Kook”).“From Time Immemorial”, published by Joan Peters in 1984, was a watershed moment for Revisionist Zionist propaganda.}

{24This is not to be confused with the original Taoism, which was not a religion; it was a philosophy.Authentic Taoism is non-dogmatic, and does not involve deification / idolatry of any kind, nor any kind of ritual.It based on Lao Tzu’s **“Tao-Te Ching”** and–as an ancillary text–Zhuang Zhou’s **“Zhuang-zi”**.So what of the religion that goes by that name?In the 2nd century A.D., a Han demagogue named “Zhang Dao-ling” founded a cult in which he deified Lao Tsu as “Tai-shang Lao-jun” while disregarding virtually everything Lao Tsu actually said.Under the aegis of “Taoism”, Zhang Dao-ling parlayed his following into an effort to create a Sichuan theocracy.That led to a pantheon of demigods–replete with a catechism and lots of incense-burning.Modern “Taoism” AS RELIGION has no connection whatsoever to the teachings of Lao Tsu–which were antithetical institutionalized dogmatism.Most religious Tao-ists today (located primarily in Hong Kong and Taiwan) have never read–and are utterly unconcerned with–the “Tao Te Ching”.Instead, they make use of the **“Tai-ping-jing”**.They also tend to recite passages from the Diamond Sutra (effectively used as a book of incantation).Also popular is the **“Lei-zi”** (named after the purported author, Lei Yu-kou of Zheng).Adherents of the “Tao-shi” sect of the religion tend to read the **“Tao-zang”**.In sum: religious Taoism is an oxymoron.The religion that operates under this moniker has as little to do with genuine Taoist principles as, say, modern Christianity has to do with the message of Jesus of Nazareth (or as Marx-ism has to do with Karl Marx).}

{25 As mentioned, other sacred texts of Bon include the “Kangyur” (translation of The Word) and “Tengyur” (translation of treatises).In the esoteric variants of Mahayana Buddhism, specifically in Tibet (and especially with the Bon and Dzogchen / Nyingma traditions), texts based on revelation are called “terma”.There are countless sages who claim to have received revelations, on which the numerous “terma” are based.Other “Sutras” that serve as sacred texts for Mahayana Buddhists include the Diamond and Heart Sutras; the Shuran-gama Sutra; the Amita-bha-vyuha / Sukha-vati-vyuha and Amita-yurdhyana Sutras (for Pure Land Buddhism); the Lotus Sutra (for Nichiren and Tendai Buddhism); and the Vajra-sekhara and Maha-vairocana Sutras (for Shingon / Tendai Buddhism; see footnote 30 below).}

{26Other writings that influenced European fascism included those of the (Sardinian) Roman Catholic zealot, “Comte” Joseph-Marie de Maistre [of Savoy]; those of the Italian esotericist, Giulio [“Julius”] Evola (who’s hyper-reactionary occul writings and **“Revolt Against The Modern World”** held sway in the 1930’s); those of Prussian jurist, Carl Schmitt (sweetheart of the Nazi movement); and those of Florentine commentator, Giovanni Papini (sweetheart of Franco’s despotic regime in Spain). Islamo-fascism exists as well, but does not make use of any divergent tracts. Fundamentalist Muslims (Salafis / Wahhabis; when Sunni) adhere to the same holy book to which other Muslims adhere: the Koran. Unlike the fundamentalist versions of most other religions, Islamic fundamentalism is INHERENTLY fascistic.}

{27“Alice Ann Bailey” was the pseudonym for Alice LaTrobe Bateman of Manchester, England.She claimed to be the messenger of a Tibetan “Master of Wisdom” whom she referred to as “Djwal Khul”.The exposition, she claimed, was dictated to her telepathically.To sample a book that was (purportedly) divinely-dictated, I browsed the compilation of her material entitled, “Serving Humanity” (released in 1972 by Lucis Press, the publishing arm of her Trust).As with any other New Age mumbo-jumbo, I found myself trudging through page after page after page of arcane drivel–grandiose perorations about esoterica.Typical of most mysticism, the material was comprised entirely of purple prose.Suffice to say: The most profound thing about the book are the two words printed on the cover.To an impartial observer, there is little difference between the ornate-yet-vacuous verbiage in this book and the vacuous verbiage found in many parts of the any other holy book–including the Koran.Transitioning between the hocus-pocus of theosophy and the hocus-pocus of

Abrahamic texts is primarily a matter of re-branding the hocus-pocus.Whether one is reading the Talmudic / Kabbalistic texts, or reading Deepak Chopra, one ends up engaging in little other than mental masturbation.}

{28This tract–infamous for being accursed–was composed by “Lord Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst” (alias: Kerry Wendell Thornley; not to be confused with the 12th-century Persian poet, Omar Khayyam of Nishapur) and “Malaclypse the Younger” (alias: Gregory Hill).The former also composed **“The Honest Book of Truth”** and **“Zenarchy”**; the latter also composed **“Summa Universalia”**.The creed’s canon of scripture continues to grow.What is unique about this particular movement is that its participants can’t seem to decide on exactly how seriously to take it.After all, the central doctrine is to not take ANYTHING too seriously, including the doctrine itself.This was best illustrated by the sacrament known as “Operation Mindfuck”, devised in 1968.}

{29This screed obviously had nothing whatsoever to do with anything JoN did or said; and so was rejected for the first three centuries after Saul of Tarsus first promulgated the Christology on which Pauline Christianity came to be based.Indeed, the “Synod of Laodicea” rejected it as canonical c. 363; and such prominent figures as Arius of Baucalis and Cyril of Jerusalem were clear on the matter.However, in keeping with the writings of the millenarianist Berber exegete, Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius of Numidia (c. 300); then as a result of the mendacious influence of Athanasius of Alexandria (4th century); the text was eventually incorporated into the canon.This was validated by the “Synod of Hippo” c. 393.It was then re-affirmed by the (first) Council of Carthage four years later.Thereafter, anyone who doubted its divine nature (e.g. the Arians and Nestorians) were persecuted.}

{30This is also considered the first Tantra.It is a Vajra-yana text composed in the 7th century at the university of Nalanda.}

{31Ancillary note: (The absolutist treatment of) behaviorism is a derelict paradigm that persists to this day in ostensibly “liberal” circles.Its corollary is relativism: the insistence that all everything is, and all anything can ever possibly be, is a social / psychological construct.Ergo there is no objective reality (a.k.a. “Reality”), and hence no Truth; there is only “your truth” and “my truth” (that is: how we’ve been conditioned to see the world in which we find ourselves).Taking an all-nurture-no-nature position entails a phobia of anything that posits a universal “human nature”.A consequence of this (obtuse) thinking is an abiding aversion to

evolutionary psychology, E.O. Wilson’s sociobiology, and Chomskian linguistics.Thus the end-all-be-all of human behavior is conditioning.The upshot of such absolutist “behaviorism” (one might call it B.F. Skinner-ism) is that homo sapiens are little more than Pavlovian dogs: programmable machines, operating primarily according to conditioned responses to certain stimuli.This “blank slate” trope has been conclusively debunked (ref. Steven Pinker’s “The Blank Slate”).Espousing such a spurious dogma invariably leads to absurd claims–such as that sex has no biological correlate.The grandfather of behaviorism (and thus of the errant “blank slate” theory of mind) was John Watson–notorious for his schemes of manipulation.Proponents of behaviorism tended to be obsessed with CONDITIONING, and harbored highly dubious views.They contended that psychology was explainable ENTIRELY by nurture; not at all by nature.Most infamous was the racist Austrian behaviorist, Konrad Lorenz, forerunner of ethology and eugenics.The most doctrinaire forms of behaviorism have all the trappings of cult activity–replete with tribalism, routine Reality-denial, and a mandate to honor sacrosanct “truths”.At the end of the day, institutionalized dogmatism is institutionalized dogmatism.}

{32Some non-Christian right-wing libertarians fetishize the writings of Ayn Rand–who’s cult was “Objectivism”.Most right-wing libertarians seem to be relatively indifferent to a Christian agenda–as with the Mercers, the Koch Brothers, Paul Singer, the Cato Institute, etc.Some adamantly Christian right-wing libertarians subscribe to the Prosperity Gospel–promulgated by charismatic figures (read: hucksters) like Oral Roberts, Frederick J. Eikerenkoetter II, Toufik Benedictus “Benny” Hinn, Hilary Hinton “Zig” Ziglar, Robert Tilton, Jesse Duplantis, Kenneth Copeland, Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, et. al.(This line of thinking was embraced by Adolf Hitler, who–in a speech delivered at Nuremberg on September 11, 1936–averred: “I believe in Providence and I believe Providence to be just.Therefore I believe that Providence always rewards the strong, the industrious, and the upright.”)Such execrable material–with its Calvinist overtones–is regularly churned out by the Heritage Foundation.The isolationist strain of American right-wing libertarianism is now referred to as “paleo-conservatism”–the epitome of which was the “John Birch Society” (largely inspired by the writings of Robert Henry Winborne Welch Jr.)Also note the Mont Pelerin Society.The hallmark features of such ideology is vituperative anti-communism, unabashed corporatism, anti-Semitism (under the auspices of anti-internationalism), vehement anti-intellectualism, and a chronic obsession with the monetary gold standard.}

{33As this shows, even the pernicious diatribe of an ideological Supreme Court justice can be treated as holy writ.Other sources of corporatist tripe is produced by odious organizations like the (Koch-funded) Mercatus Center and the American Enterprise Institute.Proponents include the likes of Paul Singer and Robert Mercer–plutocrats who don't bother composing scripture, as they need only fund propaganda to promote their agenda.}

{34This amounted to Japanese fascism, which operated under the auspices of Shinto and Zen Buddhism.As with European fascism (which was primarily Roman Catholic) and Judeo-fascism (i.e. Revisionist Zionism), Japanese fascism was characterized by a toxic–and volatile–admixture of Providentialism and ethno-centricity.Tell-tale features also include militant hyper-nationalism and a literalist reading of ancient texts.Fascism is invariably theocratic and imperialistic, as it depends on some form of cult activity and claims of blood and soil ("lebensraum" for the anointed tribe).}

{35Also influential in the development of Nazism were the writings of Hans Friedrich Karl Günther, Adolf Josef Lanz von Liebenfels, and Guido von List.As an illustration of how queer syntheses can be, a (fascist) French esotericist named Savitri Devi Mukherji (a.k.a. "Maximiani Portas") penned a series of works melding Vaishnavism and Nazism into a bizarre Hindu-fascist hybrid.Among other nutty things, it posited Hitler as an avatar of Vishnu.This demonstrated that one can merge virtually anything with anything to yield a grotesque hybrid.It is also a reminder that people are willing to believe things that are completely bonkers if it is wrapped in a sufficiently sanctified package.}

{36"[n]Uriel" is one of the angels in the Syriac "Book of Protection", the material of which would have been circulating in the Middle East during Mohammed's lifetime. (This angel also appears in the "Book of Enoch", which was originally written in the precursor to Syriac: Aramaic.)From whence did the Book of Protection come? According to legend, the text was given to Adam by angels, and was then handed down to King Solomon.}

{37Interestingly, "Daena" (revelation in Avesta) is a cognate with the Sanskrit term for enlightened thought, "dhena", from which is derived the Chinese term for Zen Buddhism, "dhayana".The general notion of revelation in Zoroastrianism is now referred to as "Mathra-Spenta".}

{38The sage-anointed-under-a-special-tree leitmotif was commandeered by hagiographers for the prophet of Islam as well.An apocryphal tale eventually started circulating that, on the way back from an errand in Syria (during his first job for Khadijah; prior to their marriage), Mohammed's appointed companion, Maysarah, reported that the self-proclaimed Last Prophet stopped to rest under a tree.During the nap, a passing monk named "Nestora" informed Maysarah: "None but a prophet ever sat beneath this tree."Gee-wiz.Moreover, Maysarah reported that he saw two angels appear over MoM, placing a small cloud over his head to protect him from the hot sun.(Evidently the special tree was not special enough to provide shade.)Reference Ibn Ishaq's "Sirat Rasul Allah" for the account of this episode.}

{39Hence familiar idioms: I heard it on the mountain.We're exhorted to go tell it on the mountain.Martin Luther King said that he'd been to the mountaintop.Etc.}

{40Ninlil would become the Assyrian "Mullissu", consort of "Ashur".She would be rendered in Greek as "Mylitta", the basis for Aphrodite.In the Sumerian "Epic of Gilgamesh", "Mashu" was a great mountain through which Gilgamesh passes (via a tunnel) on his journey to Dilmun, home of Ninlil.}

{41The product of this was the "Shatkhand-agama".In the Jain tradition, a prophet ("tirthankara") is given revelation, and recites it to disciples ("ganadharas").The material is sometimes later compiled by sages ("acharyas").The preeminent tirthankara was Maha-vira (a.k.a. "Vardha-mana").Vattakera's "Mula-chara" (2nd century) was based on the now-lost "Acharanga Sutra", which had been developed from the 5th thru 1st century B.C.Other sacred texts received via revelation are attributed to Sudharma-swami (starting in the 6th century B.C.)–including the "Sama-vayanga Sutra", the "Sutra-Kritanga", the "Sthananga Sutra", and the "Bhagavati Sutra" (a.k.a. "Vyakhya-prajnapti").There were a total of twelve Agamas based on Mahavira's revelations.The preeminent text is considered the **"Satkhand-agama"** (alt. "Dhavala) by the "acharya", Virasena (alt. "Dharasena")…followed by Kunda-kunda's **"Param-agama"**.}

{42"As a river joins another river to form a strong current, so the old books are added together in my scriptures; and they have formed a great wisdom, such as has not existed in previous generations."As the story goes, other votaries had been misled.And he had been chosen to right the ship of humankind.}

{43Another notable Terton was "Dudjom" Lingpa, who produced a canon of sacred texts called the **"Dudjom Tersar"** in the 19th century.}

{44The Maratika cave is where the fabled Buddhist monk, Padma-sambhava received his (tantric) revelations in the 8th century.The cave is also known as “Haleshi Maha-deva”, as it is also the venue where his disciple, Manda-rava, received HIS revelations.The “termas” were delivered via divine envoys called “vidya-dharas” (on behalf of the celestial Buddha, “Amitabha”).}

{45 Also ref. John 15:26 as well as Acts 1:5-8 and 2:4/38.Predictably, Muslims interpret this as a prognostication for the Last Messenger, a contention that is undermined by the fact that it is specified that said “paraclete” shall abide in all of us forever.}

{46Note, for example, “Goloka” / “Vaikunta”, posited by Hare Krishna adherents.Also note the so-called “Noösphere” posited by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.}

{47The **“Book of the Soul”** by “Türkmen-bashy” (as the former dictator anointed himself) is essentially a hokey take-off on the Koran–infused with daffy New Age mumbo-jumbo, casting himself as the central character.His successor, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, is even more of a nutcase.}

{48The notion of a “Seal of all prophets” (i.e. THE LAST prophet, hawking THE FINAL revelation) exacerbates the dysfunction of this view.There’s nothing important left to say; for if it were important, HE would have said it.}